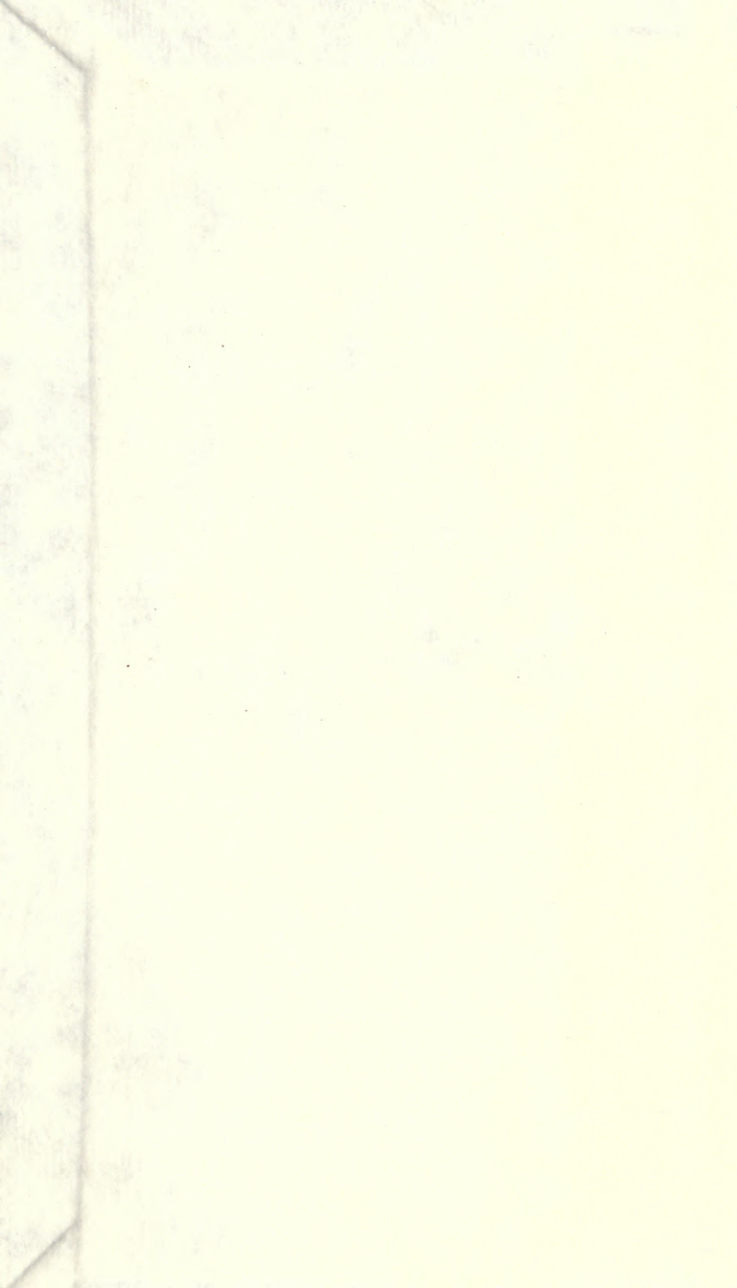


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THE BUSINESS OF PLEASURE.

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THE BUSINESS OF PLEASURE.

BY

EDMUND YATES,

AUTHOR OF "BROKEN TO HARNESS," ETC. ETC.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

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THE BUSINESS OF PLEASURE.

CHAPTER I.

CAREFULLY MOVED IN TOWN AND COUNTRY.

IF any reader of this book should require full and valuable information regarding the houses in the various suburbs of London, their size, rent, advantages and disadvantages, annual amount of sewer's rate and land-tax, soil, climate, quality of water, and other particulars, let him address a letter, post-paid, to "Wanderer," under cover to the publishers, and he will have his heart's desire. I am "Wanderer," if you please, and I am in a position to give the information named; for, during the last ten years, I have led a nomadic and peripatetic existence; now becoming the tenant of a villa here, now blossoming as the denizen of a mansion there, sipping the sweets of the assessed taxes and the parochial rates, and then flying off, with my furniture in seve-

ral large vans, to a distant neighbourhood. Want of money, possession of funds, hatred of town, detestation of the country, a cheerful misanthropy, and an unpleasant gregariousness—all these have, one by one, acted upon me, and made me their slave. What I have learned by sad experience, I now purpose to teach: setting myself up as a pillar of example and warning to my dissatisfied fellow-creatures.

Before I married, I lived in chambers in Piccadilly, kept my horse, belonged to the Brummel Club, and was looked upon as rather a fine fellow; but when I married, my Uncle Snape (from whom I obtained the supplies for my expenses, and who was a confirmed woman-hater) at once stopped my allowance, and I had nothing but my professional earnings as an Old-Bailey barrister, and a hundred a year which I had inherited. Under these circumstances I had intended going into lodgings; but my wife's family (I don't know exactly what that means: she has no mother, and her father never interferes with her or her sisters: I think it must be her sisters who are the family, but we always speak of "the family") were very genteel, and looked upon lodgings

as low; so it was generally understood that I must take a house, and that "the family" would help to furnish it. I need not mention that there was a great discussion as to where the house should be. The family lived in St. John's Wood, and wished us to be near them; but the rents in that saintly neighbourhood were beyond my means, and, after a great deal of searching and heart-aching worry, after inspecting a dozen "exact things," "just what you wanted," and "such treasures!" found for me by friends, none of which would do, I at last took a house in Bass's Buildings, in the New Road. That great thoroughfare has since been sub-divided, I think, but then it was the New Road stretching from Paddington to Islington, and our house was about a mile from the Paddington end. It was small, but so was the rent, sixty pounds a year, and it was quite large enough for my wife and me and our one servant. It had a little garden in front, between it and the road, with a straight line of flagstones leading direct from the gate to the door-steps, and bits of flower-beds (in which nothing ever grew) intersected by little gravel-paths about a foot wide. This garden was a source of great delight to my

humorous friends. One of them could be seen carefully putting one foot before the other, in order that he might not step off the path, and, after wandering in and out between the little beds, would feign excessive fatigue on his arrival at the house, declaring he had been "lost in the shrubbery;" another would suggest that we should have a guide on the spot to show visitors the nearest way; while a third hoped we intended giving some outdoor fêtes in the summer, assuring us that the "band of the Life Guards would look splendid on that," pointing to a bit of turf about the size of a pocket-handkerchief. When the street-door was opened wide back, it entirely absorbed the hall, and we could not get out of the dining-room door; but then we could, of course, always pass out through the "study," a little room like a cistern, which just held my desk and one chair.

There was a very small yard at the back, giving on to a set of stables which had their real entrance in the mews; but we were compelled to cover all our back windows with putty imitative of ground-glass, on which we stuck cut-out paper designs of birds and flowers, as these looked directly on the rooms

over the stables, inhabited by the coachman and his family; and the sight of a stalwart man at the opposite window, shaving himself in very dingy shirt-sleeves within a few feet of your nose, was not considered genteel by the family. We were rather stivy in the up-stairs rooms, owing to low ceilings, and a diffidence we felt as to opening the windows, for the New Road is a dusty thoroughfare, and the immediate vicinity of a cab-stand, though handy on some occasions, lets one into rather a larger knowledge of the stock of expletives with which the English language abounds, than is good for refined ears. But when we knew that the coachman was out, we used to open the back windows and grow very enthusiastic over "fresh air from Hampstead and Highgate," which, nevertheless, always seemed to me to have a somewhat stabley twang. One great point with the family was that there were no shops near us: that being an acme of vulgarity which, it appears, no well-regulated mind can put up with; to be sure, the row immediately opposite to us was bounded by a chemist's, but then, you know, a chemist can scarcely be called a tradesman—at least the family

thought so—and his coloured bottles were rather a relief to the eye than otherwise, giving one, at night, a strange idea of being at sea in view of land. On the door next to the chemist's stood, when we first took possession of our house in Bass's Buildings, a brass plate with "Middlemiss, Portrait Artist," on it, and by its side a little case containing miniatures of *the* officer, *the* student in cap and gown, and *the* divine in white bands with the top of the wooden pulpit growing out from under his arms, which are common to such professors. It was a thoroughly harmless little art-studio, and apparently did very little business, no one ever being seen to enter its portal. But after a twelvemonth Mr. Middlemiss died, and we heard through the electric chain of our common butcher, that his son, a youth of great spirit, was about to carry on the business. The butcher was right. The new proprietor was a youth of great spirit, no half measures with him; he certainly did not fear his fate too much, nor were his deserts small (though in his lamented father's time his dinners were said to have been restricted), for he set his fate upon one touch—of paint—to win or lose it all. He coloured the entire house a bright

vermilion, on which, from attic to basement, the following sentences were displayed in deep black letters: "The Shop for Portraits! Stop, Examine, and Judge for Yourselves! 'Sit, Cousin Percy; sit, good Cousin Hotspur'—Shakespeare. Photography defied! Your Likeness in Oils in Ten Minutes! 'The Counterfeit Presentment'—Shakespeare. Charge low, Portraits lasting! Art, not Mechanical *Labour!*" Kit-cat portraits of celebrated characters copied from photographs leered out of every window, while the drawing-room balcony was given up to Lord John Russell waving a parchment truncheon, and Mr. Sturgeon, the popular preacher, squinting at his upheld forefinger. The family were out of town when this horrible work was undertaken: when they returned, they declared with one voice that we could live in Bass's Buildings no longer, and must move at once.

I was not sorry, though I liked the little house well enough; but we had been confined there in more senses than one, and wanted more room for our family, now increased by a baby and a nurse. The nurse was a low-spirited young person, afflicted with what she called "the creeps," under the influence of

which she used to rock to and fro, and moan dismally and slap the baby on the back; and it was thought that change of scene might do her good. I was glad, too, for another reason. I had recently obtained occasional employment on a daily journal, which detained me until late at night at the newspaper-office, and I had frequently to attend night consultations at the chambers of leading barristers, to whom I was to act as junior. Bass's Buildings were a horrible distance from the newspaper-office and the chambers; and walking home at night had several times knocked me up. So my wife submitted to the family a proposition that I must remove to some more convenient position; and the family, after a struggle (based, I am inclined to think, on the reflection that lunch at my expense would not be so practicable), consented.

The neighbourhood of Russell Square was that selected, and in it we began to make constant research. There are few Londoners of the rising generation who know those ghastly streets, solemn and straight, where the daylight at the height of summer fades at four o'clock, and in winter only looks in for an hour about noon; where the houses, uniform

in dirt and dinginess, in lack of paint on their window-sills, and in fulness of filth on their windows, stare confronting each other in twin-like similitude. Decorum Street, Hessian Street, Walcheren Square, Great Dettingen Street, each exactly resembling the other, all equally dreary, equally deserted, equally heart-breaking, equally genteel. Even the family could not deny the gentility, but were good enough to remember having visited a judge in Culloden Terrace, and having been at the routs of Lady Flack, wife of Sir Nicholas Flack, Baronet, Head of the College of Physicians, and Body-preserver in Ordinary to the great Georgius of sainted memory. All the districts just named were a little above my means ; but eventually I settled down into a house in Great Dowdy Street, a row of small but very eligible tenements on the Dowdy estate. None of your common thoroughfares, to be rattled through by vulgar cabs and earth-shaking Pickford's vans ; but a self-included property, with a gate at each end and a lodge with a porter in a gold-laced hat and the Dowdy arms on the buttons of his mulberry-coloured coat, to prevent any one, except with a mission to one of the houses, from intruding

on the exclusive territory. The rent was seventy pounds a year, "on a repairing lease" (which means an annual outlay of from five-and-twenty to thirty to keep the bricks and mortar and timbers together), and the accommodation consisted of a narrow dining-room painted salmon-colour, and a little back room looking out upon a square black enclosure in which grew fearful fungi; two big drawing-rooms, the carpeting of which nearly swallowed a quarter's income; two good bed-rooms, and three attics. I never went into the basement save when I visited the cellar, which was a mouldy vault under the street-pavement only accessible through the area, and consequently rendering any one going to it liable to the insults of rude boys, who would grin through the area-railings, and say, "Give us a drop, guv'nor;" or, "Mind you don't drop the bottle, old 'un;" and other ribald remarks;—but I believe the kitchen was pronounced by the servants to be "stuffy," and the whole place "ill convenient," there being no larder, pantry, nor the usual domestic arrangements. I know, too, that we were supposed to breed and preserve a very magnificent specimen of the blackbeetle; insects which migrated to

different parts of the house in droves, and which to the number of five-and-twenty being met slowly ascending the drawing-room stairs, caused my wife to swoon, and me to invest money in a hedgehog: an animal that took up his abode in the coal-cellar on the top of the coals, and, retiring thither early one morning after a surfeit of beetles, was supposed to have been inadvertently "laid" in the fire by the cook in mistake for a lump of Wallsend.

I don't think there were many advantages in the Great Dowdy Street house (though I was very happy there, and had an immense amount of fun and pleasure) beyond the proximity to my work, and the consequent saving in cab-hire and fatigue. But I do recollect the drawbacks; and although six years have elapsed since I experienced them, they are constantly rising in my mind. I remember our being unable ever to open any window without an immediate inroad of "blacks:" triturate soot of the most penetrating kind, which at once made piebald all the anti-macassars, toilet-covers, counterpanes, towels, and other linen; I remember our being unable to get any sleep after five A.M., when, at the builder's which abutted on our back enclosure, a tre-

mendous bell clanged, summoning the workmen to labour, and from which time there was such a noise of sawing, and hammering, and planing, and filing, and tool-grinding, and bellows-blowing, interspersed with strange bel-lowings in the Celtic tongue from one Irish labourer to another, and mingled with objurgations in pure Saxon from irate overseers, that one might as well have attempted a quiet nap in the neighbourhood of Babel when the tower was in course of erection. I remember, on the first occasion of our sleeping there, a horrible yell echoing through the house, and being discovered to proceed from the nurse aforementioned, who had, at the time of her shrieking, about six A.M., heard "ghostes a burstin' in through the walls." We calmed her perturbed spirit, finding no traces of any such inroads; but were aroused in a similar manner the next morning, and then discovered that the rushing in of the New River supply, obedient to the turncock's key, was the source of the young person's fright. I remember the hot summer Sunday afternoons, when the pavement would be red-hot, and the dust, and bits of straw, and scraps of paper, would blow fitfully about with every little puff of air, and

the always dull houses would look infinitely duller with their blinds down, and no sound would fall upon the ear save the distant hum of the cabs in Holborn, or the footfall of some young person in service going to afternoon church—or to what was, in her mind, its equivalent—in all the glory of open-worked stockings, low shoes, and a prayer-book swaddled in a white cotton pocket-handkerchief. I have sat at my window on scores of such Sundays, eyeing the nose of Lazarus over the dwarf Venetian blinds opposite, or the gorgeous waistcoat of Eliason, a little higher up (for the tribes are great in the neighbourhood). I have stared upwards to catch a glimpse of the scrap of blue unclouded sky, visible above the houses; and then I have thought of Richmond Hill; of snowy tablecloths, and cool Moselle-cup, and salmon-cutlets, in a room overhanging the river at the Orkney Arms, at Maidenhead; of that sea-breeze which passes the little hotel at Freshwater Bay, in wild hurry to make play over the neighbouring downs; of shaded walks, and cool retreats, and lime avenues, and overhung bathing-places, and all other things delicious at that season; until I have nearly gone mad with hatred of Great

Dowdy Street, and fancied myself pretty able to comprehend the feelings of the Polar bears in their dull retrogressive promenade in the Zoological Gardens. That none of our friends had ever heard of Great Dowdy Street; that no cabman could be instructed as to its exact whereabouts, naming it generally as "somewhere near the Fondlin'"; that migration to a friend's house in a habitable region to dinner occasioned an enormous expense in cab-fare; that all the tradesmen with whom we had previously dealt declined our custom, "as they never sent that way;" that we found Tottenham Court Road a line of demarcation, behind which we left light, and sunshine, and humanity—on our side of which we tumbled into darkness and savagery; that we were in the midst of a hansom-cab colony, clattering home at all hours of the night; and in the immediate neighbourhood of all the organ-men, who gave us their final grind just before midnight;—all these were minor but irritating annoyances. At length, after six years' experience of this life, we heard that Uncle Snape was dead, and had left me some money; and we immediately determined on quitting Great Dowdy Street.

“Oh, my life in Egypt!” sighs Cleopatra in the Dream of Fair Women, remembering the dalliance and the wit, the Libyan banquets, and all the delights of that brief but glorious season. “Oh, my life in Agatha Villa, Old Brompton!” say I, which was quite as brief, and almost as glorious. We entered upon Agatha Villa immediately on quitting Great Dowdy Street, and revelled in the contrast. Such an elegant house; such a dining-room in red flock paper and black oak furniture, such a drawing-room in satin paper and chintz, opening with large French windows upon a little lawn, such a study for me, such a spare bed-room for a bachelor friend from Saturday till Monday! It was at Agatha Villa that we commenced our delightful little Sunday dinners—which, indeed, finished in the same place. It was at Agatha Villa we first discovered how fond people were of us; what a popular writer I was; how my oratorical displays at the Old Bailey were making a sensation. People liked coming to see us at Agatha Villa: not for the mere sake of what they got, of course, but because they were sure of meeting “such charming people” at our house: money was all very well, they

would remark, but no money could bring together such a host of genius as was always to be seen at Agatha Villa. The host of genius (I'm not speaking of myself) was expensive to entertain; it stopped late, it dined heavily, it smoked on the lawn, and remained sipping cold drinks until past midnight. Its admirers remained too: sometimes some of the host of genius borrowed money and didn't return it; the host of genius was always either painting a picture which I was expected to buy, or giving a concert which we were expected to patronise, or having a "ben" for which we had to take stalls. From one of the admirers of the host of genius I bought a pair of horses, they were not good horses; from another I purchased a phaeton, it *was* a bad one! I confess I did not like the manner in which some of the host of genius used to climb up the walls and kiss their hands to Miss Crump's young ladies who were walking in the next garden, and I owed to Miss Crump that it was too strong retaliation even for the pianoforte practice at five A.M.: they could not take any liberties with my neighbour on the other side, for he was Dr. Winks, the celebrated mad-doctor, and we were always

in a state of mental terror lest some of his patients should get loose and come over the wall at us. However, the life at Agatha Villa, though merry, was brief. Through my own exertions, and those of the host of genius, I ran through a couple of thousand pounds in two years, and then the Cotopaxi Grand Imperial Mining Company, in which I had invested the rest of Uncle Snape's money, went to smash, and I had to give up Agatha Villa.

The thought of having to return to London and its dreariness, in the summer which had just set in, was the bitterest morsel of that tart of humility which we were about to partake of; and you may judge, therefore, with what delight I received an offer of a country-house, rent free, for a year. "It's a capital old house, any way," said old Cutler, its owner, "a capital house, near town, and yet thoroughly in the country. I'm going to take my gal abroad for a year to see the Continent, and you're not only welcome to live at Wollops, but I shall be obliged to you for keeping the place aired." Now, Wollops *was* a house, if you like! An old red-brick Queen-Anne mansion, with little deep mullioned diamond-paned windows, with quaint old armour in the hall,

and a portrait of Brabazon de Wollop, temp. Charles the Second, over the chimney-piece; there were long passages, and tapestry-hung rooms, and oak corridors, and secret doors, and a wine-cellar so like a subterraneous dungeon, that my heart sunk within me every time I entered it; there were likewise numerous bed-rooms, with tremendous bedsteads all plumes and hangings; and a stone kitchen like that one in the Tower of London which Mr. Cruikshank drew. The house stood in the middle of splendid grounds; there was a carriage-drive up to it; its drawing and dining-room windows looked out upon a beautiful lawn dotted here and there with brilliant beds of verbena and scarlet geranium; and there was a lake, and a kitchen-garden, and an orchard, all kept up at Mr. Cutler's expense; and everything was so noble and so grand, that a friend, who knew the reason of our quitting Agatha Villa, remarked, on seeing Wollops, that one more attempt at retrenchment would take us into Buckingham Palace. From our windows we looked away over green fields, to Harrow on the one side, to Highgate on the other, and it was worth something when coming

From brawling courts
And dusty purlieus of the law,

to feel your feet on the turf, with the sweet fresh air blowing round you, and that soft silence, broken only by the pipe of bird or hum of insect, which is the greatest of all rural charms to an overworked Londoner.

Wollops was too far for the host of genius, as they could not have got back at night, so we only had our own friends and the family.

I am happy to say that the croquet-parties at Wollops were the cause of marrying off my wife's two younger sisters: one to a revising barrister, and the other to a county-court judge: while the elder girls, who had been very uncivil about what they called the "goings on" at Agatha Villa, were so delighted with Wollops that they forgave us off-hand, and each came and stayed a month. All this was during the summer weather; the autumn of that year was as good as summer, warm, clear, and sunny, and we were thoroughly happy. But, one fatal morning in the middle of November we got up and found winter had arrived; the wind roared through the old house, and moaned and shrieked in the long corridors; the rain dashed against the badly-

fitting romantic windows, and lodged in large pools on their inner sills; the water-pipe along the house was choked, overflowed, soaked through the old red brick, which was just like sponge, and coming through the drawing-room wall, spoilt my proof copy of Landseer's *Titania*. The big bare trees outside rattled and clashed their huge arms, the gardeners removed every thing from the beds, the turf grew into rank grass, and the storms from Harrow to Highgate were awful in their intensity. Inside the house, the fires would not light for some time, and then the chimneys smoked awfully, and the big grates consumed scuttles of coals and huge logs of wood without giving out the smallest heat. The big hall was like a well; after dark the children were afraid to go about the passages; and the servants came in a body and resigned, on account of the damp of the stone kitchen. Gradually the damp penetrated everywhere; lucifers would not strike, a furry growth came upon the looking-glass, the leather chairs all stuck to us when we attempted to rise. My wife wanted us to leave Wollops, but I was firm—for two nights afterwards; then the rats, disturbed by the rains from their usual

holes, rushed into our bed-room and danced wildly over us. The next morning at six A.M. I despatched the gardener to town, to bring out three cabs, and removed my family in those vehicles to lodgings in Cockspur Street, where I am at present.

CHAPTER II.

AN EASTER REVIVAL.

A PLEASANT place, the Fenchurch Street Railway Station, to a person who knows at which of the numerous pigeon-holes he should apply for his ticket, and who does not mind running the chance of being sent to Margate when his destination is Kew. A pleasant place for a person without corns, who is, what grooms say of horses, "well ribbed up," and whose sides are impervious to elbow-pressure; who is complacent in the matter of being made the resting-place for bundles in white-spotted blue-cotton pocket-handkerchiefs, who is undisturbed by squirted tobacco-juice, who likes the society of drunken sailors, Jew crimps, and a baby-bearing population guiltless of the wash-tub. It has its drawbacks, the Fenchurch Street Railway Station, but, for that matter, so has Pall Mall. It was crammed last Easter Monday—so crammed that I had literally to fight my way up to the pay-place,

above which was the inscription, "Tickets for the Woodford line;" and when I had reached the counter, after many manifestations of personal strength and activity, it was disappointing to receive a ticket for a hitherto unheard-of locality called Barking, and to be severely told that I could not book to Woodford for twenty minutes. I retired for a quarter of an hour into the shadow of one of the pillars supporting the waiting-hall, and listened to the dialogue of two old farmers who were patiently waiting their turn. "A lot of 'em!" said one, a tall old man with brown body-coat, knee-cords, and top-boots, having at his feet a trifle of luggage in the shape of a sack of corn, an old saddle, and a horse-collar. "A lot of 'em! all a pleasin' excursionin', I s'pose!" "Ah!" said the other, a wizen dirty-faced little fellow in a long drab great-coat reaching to his heels, "it were different when we was young, warn't it, Maister Walker? It was all fairs then!" "Stattys!" said the first old boy, as though half in correction; "there were Waltham Statty, and Leyton Statty, and Harpenden Statty, and the gathering of the beastes at Cheshunt, and that like!" And then the two old fel-

lows interchanged snuff-boxes and shook their heads in silent lamentation over the decadence of the times. The twenty minutes wore away; the Barking people disappeared slowly, filtering one by one through the smallest crack of a half-opened door; and a stout policeman, shouting, "Now for the Woodford line!" heralded us to the glories of martyrdom through the same mysterious outlet.

What took me out of town last Easter Monday? Not a search for fresh air; there was plenty of that in London, blowing very fresh indeed, and rasping your nose, ears, and chin, and other uncovered portions of your anatomy, filling your eyes and mouth with sharp stinging particles of dust, and cutting you to the very marrow, whenever you attempted to strike out across an open space. Not an intention to see the country, which was then blank furrow and bare sticks, where in a couple of months would be smiling crops and greenery; not with any view of taking pedestrian exercise, which I abominate; not to join in any volunteer evolutions; not to visit any friends; simply to see the "revival of the glorious Epping Hunt" which was advertised to take place at Buckhurst Hill, and

to witness the uncarting of the deer before the Roebuck Inn.

We were not a very sporting "lot" in the railway carriage into which I forced an easy way. There were convivialists in the third and second classes (dressed for the most part in rusty black, carrying palpable stone-bottles, which lay against their breast-bones under their waistcoats, and only protruded their black-corked necks), who were going "to the Forest," and who must have enjoyed that umbrageous retreat on one of the bitterest days in March; but we had no nonsense of that kind in my first-class bower. There was a very nice young man opposite me, in a long greatcoat, a white cravat, and spectacles, which were much disturbed in their fit by the presence of a large mole exactly on the root of his nose between his eyebrows, upon which the glasses rode slantingly, and gave him a comic, not to say inebriated look: a curate, apparently, by the way in which he talked of the schools, and the clubs, and the visitings, and the services, to the old lady whom he was escorting; a clean, wholesome-looking old lady enough, but obviously not strong in conversation, as she said nothing the

whole journey but, with a sigh of great admiration, "Ah! Mr. Parkins!" and rubbed her hands slowly over a black and white basket, like a wicker draught-board. Then there were two City gentlemen, who had "left early," as they called it, and were going to make holiday in digging their gardens, who, after languidly discussing whether the reduction in the Budget would be on insurance or income, waxed warm in an argument on the right of way through Grunter's Grounds. And next to me there was a young lady, who, from the colour and texture of a bit of flesh between the end of her puce-coloured sheepskin-glove and the top of her worked cuff, I judged to be in domestic service, but who had on a round hat with a white feather, a black silk cloak, a scarlet petticoat, and a crinoline which fitted her much in the same way that the "Green" fits Jack on the first of May. We dropped this young lady at Snaresbrook, where she was received by a young man with a larger amount of chin than is usually bestowed on one individual; the two City men got out at Woodford, with the Grunter's Grounds question still hot in dispute; and at Buckhurst Hill I left the curate

and the old lady sole occupants of the carriage.

There was no difficulty in finding the way to the scene of the sports, for the neighbourhood was alive, and crowds were ascending the hill. Not very nice crowds either, rather of the stamp which is seen toiling up Skinner Street on execution mornings, or which, on Easter Mondays, fifteen years ago, patronised Chalk-Farm Fair. Close-fitting caps pulled down over the eyes, with hanks of hair curling out from underneath, no shirt-collars, wisps of cotton neckcloths, greasy shiny clothes, thick boots, and big sticks, characterised the male visitors: while the ladies were remarkably free in their behaviour. The resident population evidently did not like us; all the houses were tight closed, and the residents glared at us hatefully out of their windows, and received with scornful looks our derisive remarks. A prolific neighbourhood, Buckhurst Hill, whither the moral and cheerful doctrines of the late Mr. Malthus have apparently not penetrated, as there was no window without a baby, and there were many with three; a new neighbourhood, very much stuccoed, and plate-glassed, and gable-ended,

like the outskirts of a sea-side watering-place; very new in its shops, where the baker combined corn-chandlery and life-assurance agency—the greengrocer had a small coal and wood and coke tendency—and where you might be morally certain that under the shadow of the chemist's bottles and plaster-of-paris horse lurked bad light-brown cigars. On Buckhurst Hill one first became aware of the sporting element in the neighbourhood by the presence of those singular specimens of horse-flesh which hitherto had been only associated in my mind with Hampstead and Blackheath,—wretched wobegone specimens, with shaggy coats, broken knees, and a peculiar lacklustre-ness of eye, and which got pounded along at a great pace, urged by their riders, who generally sat upon their necks with curled knees, after the fashion of the monkeys in the circus steeple-chase. .

When we got to the top of the hill, we emerged upon the main road, and joined the company, who, possessing their own vehicles, had disdained the use of the railway. The most popular conveyance I found to be that build of cart which takes the name of "White-chapel," from the fashionable neighbourhood

where it is most in vogue; but there were also many four-wheeled chaises, so crammed with occupants as to merit the appellation of "cruelty-vans," constantly bestowed upon them by the light-hearted mob; there were pleasure-vans filled with men, women, and children; a few cabs, and a large number of those low flat trucks, which look as if a drawer in a conchologist's cabinet had been cleared out, put upon wheels, and had a shambling pony or depressed donkey harnessed to it, and which, I believe, are technically known as "flying bedsteads." The dust raised by these vehicles, and by a very large pedestrian crowd, was overwhelming; the noise caused by the traffic and by the shouting of the many-headed was terrific; and the thought of an early lunch in some secluded corner of the Roebuck (a tavern whence the hunt starts, and which has for many years enjoyed an excellent reputation) was my only source of comfort. A few minutes' walk brought me to an extemporised fair, with gingerbread stalls, nut-shooting targets, and two or three cake-stands, with long funnels projecting from them like gigantic post-horns: which I found from their in-

scriptions were, "Queen Victoria's own Rifle Gallery," "The British Volunteers' Range—Defence not Defiance—Try a Shot;" and beyond this fair lay the Roebuck, charmingly quaint and clean, and gable-ended, and purple-fronted.

The crowd round the door was rather thick, and it was with some difficulty that I edged my way over the threshold, and then I came upon a scene. What should have been the space in front of the bar, a passage leading through into a railed court-yard joining upon the garden, some stairs leading to the upper rooms, and a side-room, the parlour of the place, were all completely choked with visitors. And such visitors! The London rough is tolerably well known to me; I have seen him in his own peculiar territories in the neighbourhood of Drury Lane and Shadwell; I have met him at executions and prize-fights; I have been in his company during the public illuminations;—but I never saw such specimens as had taken indisputable possession of the Roebuck Inn, nor did I ever elsewhere hear such language. All ages were represented here—the big burly rough with the receding forehead, the massive jaw, and

the deep-set restless eye; and the old young boy, the "gonoph," whose oaths were as full-flavoured as those of the men, and, coming from such childish lips, sounded infinitely more terrible; brazen girls flaunting in two-penny finery; and battered women bearing weazenened children in their arms. Approach to the bar-counter was only possible after determined and brisk struggles, and loud and fierce were the altercations as to the prices charged, and the attempts at evading payment. I could not get out of the house by the door at which I had entered, as the crowd behind was gradually forcing me forward, and I had made up my mind to allow myself to drift through with the mob, when I heard a cry of "Clear the road!" and, amid a great shouting and laughing, I saw a gang of some thirty ruffians in line, each holding on to the collar of the man in front of him, make a rush from the back door to the front, pushing aside or knocking down all who stood in the way. Being tall and tolerably strong, I managed to get my back against a wall, and to keep it there, while these Mohocks swept past; but the people round me were knocked over like ninepins. This wave of humanity ebbed in

due course, and carried me out with it into the garden, where I found a wretched brass band playing a polka, and some most atrocious-looking scoundrels grotesquely dancing in couples to the music.

I got out through the garden to the stables, and thence round again to the front, where I found an access of company, all pretty much of the same stamp. I was pushing my way through them when I heard my name pronounced, and looking round saw an old acquaintance. Most Londoners know the appearance of the King of the Cabmen: a sovereign whose throne is a hansom driving-box, and whose crown is the curliest-brimmed of "down the road" hats. I have for many years enjoyed the privilege of this monarch's acquaintance, and have, in bygone days, been driven by him to the Derby, when he has shown a capital appreciation in the matter of dry sherry as a preferable drink to sweet champagne, and once confidentially informed me—in reference to his declining a remnant of a raised pie—that "all the patties in the world was nothing to a cold knuckle of lamb." The monarch couldn't quite make out my presence on Buckhurst Hill (he was evidently

there as a patron of the sport), but he struck his nose with his forefinger, and said mysteriously, "Lookin' after 'em, sir?" I nodded, and said, "Yes;" upon which he winked affably, declared, without reference to any thing in particular, that "he wasn't licked yet, and wouldn't be for ten year," and made his way in the direction of the tap.

The aspect of the day now settled down into a slate-coloured gloom, and a bitter east-wind came driving over the exposed space in front of the Roebuck where the crowd stood. Hitherto there had not been the slightest sign of any start; but now some half-dozen roughish men on long-haired cobs—ill-built clumsy creatures, without the ghost of a leap in any of them—were moving hither and thither; and in the course of half an hour the old huntsman, mounted on a wretched chestnut screw, blowing a straight bugle, and followed by four couple and a half of harriers, made his way through the crowd and entered the inn-yard. After another half-hour, we had another excitement in the arrival of a tax-cart containing something which looked like the top of a tester-bed in a servants' attic, but under which was reported to be the stag; and

the delight of the populace manifested itself in short jumps and attempted peepings under the mysterious cover. Then we flagged again, and the mob, left to itself, had to fall back on its own practical humour, and derived great delight from the proceedings of a drunken person in a tall hat, who butted all his neighbours in the stomach—and from a game at foot-ball, which had the advantage of enabling the players to knock down everybody, men, women, and children, near to whom the ball was kicked. At length even these delights began to pall: the start had been advertised for two o'clock—it was already three; and discontent was becoming general, when a genius hit upon the notion of setting fire to the lovely bright yellow furze with which the heath was covered, and which was just coming into blossom. No sooner thought of than accomplished! Not in one place but in half-a-dozen; smoke rose, crackling was heard, and in a few minutes in place of the pretty flower was a charred and blackened heap. This was a tremendous success; and the mob, though half stifled by the smoke and half singed by the flame, which leapt fiercely from bush to bush under the influence of the wind, and

roared and crackled lustily, remained thoroughly delighted, until the crowd of mounted sportsmen had much increased, and the deer-containing cart was seen to be on the move.

Bumping and jolting over the rugged ground, the cart was brought to the bottom of a small hill, and shouts arose that a space should be cleared into which the deer could be uncartered. But this phase of your British public does not like a clear space; it likes to be close to what it wants to see; and the consequence was, that the crowd clustered round within four feet of the cart, and steadfastly refused to go back another inch. The persons who managed the business seemed to object; but, as all remonstrance was futile, they took off the top of the tester-bed, and a light-brown deer, without any horns, and looking exceedingly frightened, bounded out of the cart, took two short side jumps, amid the roar of a thousand voices, leaped some palings into an adjacent garden, and then started off across country at a splitting pace. The horsemen did not attempt to follow, but struck off, some to the right and some to the left, to find an easy way into the fields; and the pedestrians climbed on walls, and gave a thousand

contrary opinions as to where "she" had gone. The dogs I never saw, nor did I see any further traces of the mounted field, nor of the stag, nor of the huntsman, nor did I find any one who had. No sooner was the stag off than the people began to return home; and I followed their example: convinced that of the numerous silly "revivals" of which we have heard of late, this attempt to resuscitate the Epping Hunt is one of the least required and the most absurd.

CHAPTER III.

THE MILLERS AND THEIR MEN.

WHAT does he say? He says, "Come at six to-night." Another delay! When shall I hear; when shall I get it?

What I want to get is "the Office:" not a place of trust, not a mahogany-desked, leather-chaired, sky-lighted place of business; not the post-office, nor the booking-office, nor the police-office, nor the railway-office, but still "the office." From one office I am to get another; and the first is the head-quarters of the sporting world, and the second is the name of the place where the two great Millers, whose fame has extended far beyond the farnaceous world, are speedily to meet, and the whole is—Sphynx avaunt! I will talk no longer in riddles; it is useless; for some Œdipus will soon unravel my mystery, remembering of Miss Kilmansegg—

"How her husband had stormed and treated her ill,
Because she refused to go down to a mill,
She couldn't tell where, but remembered still
That the Miller's name was Mendoza."

So, to be plain and explicit, I am favoured with introductions to the conductors of that newspaper which has for many years been the oracle of the sporting world, and the guide, philosopher, and friend of sporting men of every degree; and from them I have been promised "the office," or the information when and where the meeting between Messrs. Heenan and King, the two great Millers, is to take place, and the chance of a safe conveyance to the meeting. It ought to repay me when it comes off, for it has been a source of tremendous annoyance beforehand. For days previously I have lived in a whirl of excitement and in a cloud of slang. In order that every thing should be thoroughly "square," every thing has been left excessively "dark," every body has been enveloped in a halo of Rosicrucian mystery, which was so infectious as to lay hold of every body else. Nobody spoke above a whisper about any thing; and I am bound to state that, falling in with the general view, I have winked until my eye is weak, and laid my finger alongside my nose until the latter organ is bent, and spoken in a charnel-house whisper whenever the topic of the Millers was broached, without the smallest idea why I

have gone through any of these proceedings. I have been to the office of the sporting newspaper—once on Tuesday morning, when I was very civilly received, and told to come on that evening, when I was begged to look in the following morning; and now they tell me, with the utmost courtesy, and with an amount of mystery which is in itself exciting, to “come at six to-night.” Yesterday, when I paid my first visit, the whole office was filled with excited gentlemen of the pugilistic profession, who were, I learned, the chosen “ring-keepers,” and who had come there to receive instructions as to their duties; with tawny-moustached swells, known to the establishment, who were courteously addressed; and with prying members of the public, who were speedily dismissed. Now, on this Wednesday morning, I find the place in ordinary working order, and with not a stranger present. I pass the glazed room, where the compositors are busily picking up their types; I find one of the principal members of the staff reading his proof; I see the boys flying about with the long wet slips just fresh pulled;—to-night at six evidently means business; either I shall know every thing then, or

the meeting of the Millers is indefinitely postponed.

I return to my ordinary avocations; and while engaged in them during the afternoon I am visited by my own familiar friend, who tells me that the great event is over,—that the Millers met that morning, and that, after an interview of an hour and a half's duration, one of them, the representative of Transatlantic grist, had succumbed. There is no doubt about it; the interview took place near Michel-dever station; and my friend has just seen a railway-guard hot from the South-Western line. To my friend I repeat my mysterious pantomime; I wink my eye, and lay my forefinger alongside my nose. There must be some tremendous hidden force in this; for my friend retires, evidently believing that the guard aforesaid is mendacious. As St. Mary's clock strikes six, I enter the sporting newspaper office; the compositors are hard at it under their green-paper-shaded lamps, the boys are flying about with the fluttering slips of proof; but the editor's door is locked, and the gentleman to whom I have been accredited has not come in. So I wait in the passage, humbly expectant. Close by me is a

little closet, wherein a boy and a man are "reading proofs." I hear them running over the subject-matter in that dull monotonous jargon invariable on such occasions. I think it must be coursing that they are discussing, for I catch references to Mr. Jones's black dog and Mr. Robinson's slate-coloured bitch; and then a stout man in shirt-sleeves and a white apron—the master-printer evidently—looks in, and asks if they've got that Billiards, and what's become of the slip of Canine. Now arrives my friend, and with him another gentleman, who is introduced to me as the oldest member of the journal's staff, who has been connected with it for thirty years, and who has officially attended more meetings of Millers than perhaps any one living; a quiet unpretending-looking gentleman enough, but with an eye like a bead, and a firm-set jaw looking like Determination itself. The editor of the sporting newspaper, who is always stakeholder and referee on all occasions when the Millers meet, and who throughout his life has laboured with the utmost spirit to ameliorate the social position of the Millers, never shrinking from condemning them in the most courageous manner and under circumstances

involving the deepest personal peril to himself when they were wrong, but fighting their battles manfully when they were right,—the editor is unfortunately laid up by illness at home, and my new acquaintance with the determined jaw is on this occasion, as on many previous ones, to act as his representative. He tells me that he and his party will sleep at the London-Bridge Terminus Hotel; that he will engage a bed there for me, and “take care of me in the morning.” Mysterious, but satisfactory, I retire with an expression of thanks, feeling sure that the meeting of the Millers will speedily take place, and that I shall be there.

The meeting of the Millers! London thinks of nothing else! Round the door of the office of the sporting newspaper stands an open-mouthed expectant crowd, who glare at me as I come out, and hoarsely bellow to me to “say vere.” As I pay my cabman, he touches his hat and asks me for the latest “tip.” At my club, where I dine, I find the coffee-room tables surrounded by strange faces, country members, who have made the cattle-show the excuse for a flying visit to town; but who have really come up to see the Millers meet. In the smoking-

room æsthetic conversation is voted a bore, and scandal is snuffed out. On this evening Bopps can get no audience for his complaints against the Royal Academy; Sheet's rumour of the intended starting of a new magazine is pooh-poohed; and Middleditch's story of a peccant countess does not enchain a single listener. The Millers, the Millers! their weight and height; what one has done, and what the other promises; their system of training; who is "on," and what are the offered odds; what is the meaning of "fighting the sack," and what is always a deadly blow;—the Millers, the Millers! until we get so excited that little Gillott, who has never wielded any thing heavier than a pen, doubles up his arm and begins to feel for his biceps; and old Millboard, who painted "Corinthians" half a century ago, totters on to his feet to show us how Tom Cribb floored Molyneux. Still, the Millers! Looking in at the Music-Hall, on my way down to the City, I find the bucolic element laughing hoarsely, indeed, at the humour of the black men or the saltatory gyrations of the Cure; but relapsing during the *entr'actes* into earnest talk about the Millers, and the chances of their

coming meeting; the brickman outside opines that I am a captain, and that I shall be "looking on at 'em at Aldershott" in the morning; the topic soon intrudes into an extemporised verse of a comic song (very shaky in the rhyme, and not at all measured as to the number of words in a line), and is received with roars of applause. So did the people jest and laugh before the great encounter of the gladiators on the last day of Pompeii, when Sporus boasted, and Lydon hoped, and the girl sang

"Ho! ho! for the merry, merry show!"

Still the Millers! Down at the London Bridge Terminus Hotel, where I find my friends, excited groups dot the coffee- and smoking-rooms, and the young ladies in the bar smile with thorough knowingness when we desire to be called at four. The manager is a wag, and "supposes we are going out shooting," employing, at the same time, the mysterious wink and the masonic touch of the nose. The waiter who brings our grog lingers near the table to catch fragments of our conversation, and points us out to yearning visitors. As we take our bed-candles, our friend Determination stops to exchange

a word or two with a flat-nosed man, who, followed by three vacuous youths, has just entered. "That was Jim Sloggers," says Determination afterwards; "he's taking down Lord Tomnoddy and those two other swells." It is one o'clock before I get to bed; it is two o'clock before I get to sleep. From the adjacent railway-yard come hoarse murmurings as of a gathering crowd; shrieks of belated engines, moaning, and grunts of overladen goods trains; up the staircase comes tumbling the bucolic element, apparently somewhat the worse for brandy-and-water; and hoarse good-nights, in all kinds of uncouth dialects, break upon the ear, then gigantic boots are flung out, waking every echo; and finally, with my mind full of the Millers, I glide off into the land of nod.

The remorseless "boots" thunders at my door at four o'clock; and, after a hasty toilette, I make my way down the staircase (on which I encounter a gentleman in full dress, who has just come from the Dramatic College Ball, and who stares in great wonder at my simple costume and billicock hat, and who is evidently tremendously amazed at my carrying the lid of a hamper under my arm) to

the coffee-room, where I find my friends already at breakfast off cold chicken and ham. My original acquaintance of the sporting newspaper, who is to act as reporter on this occasion, has apparelled himself in a shooting suit, thick boots and gaiters, and has immediately under his greatcoat and over all the rest of his clothes a thick blue woollen fisherman's Guernsey, a most splendid preventive against cold; he has a thick travelling-cap on his head, and in his pocket he carries a gigantic note-book, large enough to contain at least a volume of Macaulay's History written out in text-hand. I glance at Determination, and find him in the dress of the previous evening; frock-coat, dark trousers, chimney-pot hat, blue bird's-eye scarf with valuable pin well protruded, watch-chain plainly visible: "Lord bless you! they won't touch me," he says; "they know better!" A hurried breakfast over, we strike across to the terminus, through a very small fringe of black-guardism we push our way instantaneously, and then march quietly up between open ranks of police to a door, through which we are at once admitted to the station. At the open window I pay three sovereigns, receiv-

ing in return a red-and-white ticket, bearing the words "From London, and back;" then I take temporary leave of my companions, who have business to look after; and being joined by two other friends, I seat myself in a second-class compartment of the enormous train, which is already nearly full.

There is no mistake about our compartment being quite full. In addition to myself and my two friends there are a thin hatchet-faced pedestrian, two or three pugilists, one with an enormously thick stick, one rather merrily "fresh," but all perfectly civil and inoffensive, and two nondescript men, one with little bleary red eyes. A rough freemasonry is at once established; all talk of the admirable manner in which the arrangements have up to this point been carried out; one of the pugilists has just left King; "I aired his fightin' drawers for him and see him eat three chops for his breakfast, like a man," he says; and we are full of conversation, when a porter, passing along the line of carriages, calls out "All tickets ready." Hasty whispering takes place between three or four of my fellow-travellers; and the thin pedestrian, who is next to me, asks me if "I'd mind sitting

for'ard." I comply at once ; the pedestrian shrinks into nothing behind my tolerably broad shoulders, and the man on the other side (the pugilist with the stick) sits "for'ard" too. Plainly the pedestrian has no ticket and is trying a dodge. But, alas for him, the ticket-collector, a strong official, bodily enters the carriage, and collects from each individual. "Your ticket?" to the pedestrian. "Mr. Willoughby's got it," stammering reply. "What?" Stammering reply repeated. "Out you go!" Pedestrian seized by the collar and hurled into the arms of expectant porters, who speedily run him out of the station. The whole business is so instantaneous that we cannot help laughing at the poor fellow's expulsion, and we are in the midst of our shout, when—the officials having withdrawn—one of the pugilists lifts up his railway rug, and the bleary-eyed little man creeps out from underneath the seat! Neither I nor my two friends had seen him disappear, and we stared in wonder at the narrow compass in which he had packed himself, and the marvellously quick way in which he had hidden. He is thoroughly civil and frank; tells us he was determined to see the fight; that

he would not have minded giving ten shillings for his ticket, but could not scrape together the three pounds; and then he gave us an account of his intrusion into the railway—how he climbed up ladders and dragged them after him, crossed roofs, dropped down walls, and finally crept under the long line of carriages and made his entry through the window; after hearing which, I have a much meaner opinion of Latude's escape from the Bastille, and think that my bleary-eyed friend really deserved his trip.

It is very nearly six o'clock before the train moves out of the station, and the patience of those who arrived at three has been severely tried. But there has been no outbreak, and, indeed, the whole proceedings have been carried on with perfect quietude. Once off, we rattle along at capital speed, and almost before we expect it find ourselves alongside the platform at Redhill Junction, listening to the porters calling out the name of the station in their ordinary manner. This is evidently a portion of the entire "gag." We are an excursion-train, of whose object the Railway Company is, of course, entirely ignorant; to ensure our proper safety at Lon-

don Bridge, the police were engaged; and now, as some of us may perhaps be anxious to alight at Redhill, the porters give us all due information. But nobody gets out, although numberless heads are protruded through carriage-windows to stare at five members of the Surrey constabulary, who are grinning on the platform; and we speed away once more. Some distance further down we strike off the main line towards Tunbridge, and the pugilistic gentleman who was "fresh" at starting, and whom frequent applications to a brandy-flask have made very convivial, is earnest in his offers to "take ten to one they'll fight in the same place as Sayers and Heenan did"—nobody responding, he takes refuge in sleep. Onward still, through the lovely fresh dawn, which is first a rift in a black cloud, and gradually broadens into a flood of rosy light, so lovely that the attention of all my fellow-travellers is excited, and the pugilists break out into raptures of admiration; a saying of one of them that it's "like a picture" being capped by one of the nondescript men, who says, "There's no artist like Nater—none of 'em could touch that!" On, with the growing day, through Kent—that lovely English garden,

where the furrowed land lies in purple gloaming, where the stacked hop-poles stand black against the horizon, where the leafless woods fringe the blue hills, and the lazy cattle are here and there pastern-deep in the flooded fields. On, past a hitherto unheard-of little place called Frant, to an equally unknown station called Wadhurst, where we stop, our journey at an end. No fear of official interruption at present, at all events; for there is not a soul near us, and the little station-tavern, unexpectant of eleven hundred visitors, is tight closed. In a long straggling line we excursionists start off at once down a red-clay lane; and then for the first time I have opportunity of observing the material of which we are composed. I don't think there are a dozen "roughs" in the entire company, and even they are so outnumbered as to be on their best behaviour; swells muster strongly; the faces which you are accustomed to see at the Opera and in the Park can be counted by dozens; a few theatrical people, a few authors, a few reporters, some fifty professional pugilists engaged as ring-keepers and all armed with long gutta-percha riding-whips, crowds of heavy-footed broad-shouldered yeomen (se-

duced from the cattle-show), and hundreds of sporting publicans and tradesmen. Now do we in gaiters congratulate ourselves on our forethought, for the loam is heavy and sticky, and soon we leave the lane and enter a field, where apparently our pitch is to be made. Hither among us arrives a man laden with camp-stools, with which he drives a brisk trade, retailing them at ten shillings a-piece: I do not purchase, for I still retain my hamper-lid, on the possession of which I have received frequent congratulations from unknown gentlemen, who characterise my having brought it as a "reg'lar leery move." After half-an-hour's waiting, it is discovered that, for some reason unknown to me, the field which we occupy is not suitable; and then commences a regular steeple-chase, over ploughed land, through stiff hedges and over swollen dykes, until at length we arrive at a sloping field at the ridge of a hill, where the ropes and stakes are extracted from the sacks in which they have been conveyed, and the formation of the ring commences in earnest.

At this moment, I and some hundreds of others are guilty of great weakness in pur-

chasing, at the price of ten shillings, an "inner-ring ticket," which is supposed to confer on us certain privileges of comfort and security. As it is, we discover, when the ropes and stakes are fixed, that there is no outer ring, or if there be, there is no one in it, every one crowding into the first circle, immediately round the fighting-ring, whether they have tickets or not: indeed, one on either side of me are two country joskins in smock-frocks and soft wide-awakes, who have walked over from an adjacent field. The stakes of the fighting-ring, painted blue, and adorned at the top with the "colours" or "arms" of the respective Millers, look like gigantic constables' staves; from one to the other strong ropes are knotted, making a square area of about twenty-four feet. And now, with very great trouble, and with much show of assault but without any actual molestation, the ring-keepers have driven every one from the fighting-ring, and the crowd, some squatting on the ground, some seated on their camp-stools, others standing in dense masses behind, and others again mounted in trees and on ladders propped against the hedges, begins to murmur with expectation. Betting, of which there

have been mutterings all along, now breaks forth in shouts, and keen-eyed men are betting long odds, which they offer to lay on the American. In the space of three minutes I hear two bets of two hundred pounds to one, and thirty-five to twenty, all on Heenan. Now, a roar! What is it? Brayvo Tom! Hooray King! and I look up and see a tall man stepping into the ring, and bowing to his welcome. A good-looking man this, with nothing of the prize-fighter in his face, which yet has a singular and almost sinister expression, owing to the vast development of the frontal bones and the smallness and shiftiness of his eyes. Another roar! Brayvo Jack! a tremendous shout this time greets Mr. Heenan, who grins confidently, and makes a sort of mock salute. Both men are together now, tossing for choice of position. The toss is won by Heenan, who, of course, chooses the higher ground, where he has also the advantage of the sun at his back. In pursuance of this arrangement, King comes to the corner where I stand; his seconds place his chair, and, so soon as he is seated, wrap him all round in a large green rug. He sits perfectly passive, his face immobile, his enormous brown hands occasionally pulling

the rug tighter round him. In the opposite corner, so surrounded that I cannot see him, is his adversary. But I don't want to see him yet; I have quite enough to do in looking at a middle-sized man, dressed in a fantastic-yellow-silk jacket, with Heenan's gaudy-striped "colours" round his neck, and a close-fitting fur-cap on his head; a man with a flat nose, an enormous jowl, and a face altogether like a slack-baked quartern loaf of dirty dough — Tom Sayers. He is acting as one of Heenan's seconds, and has, it is said, backed him for a great deal of that money which the English people subscribed for the courageous Thomas after his fight at Farnborough. A tremendous wrangle is going on all this time in the ring; the editor of the sporting newspaper, unable to attend himself, has appointed my friend Determination to act as referee, and this is objected to by King's party, who with frightful language declare they will not have him in that capacity. The row is tremendous, awful threats are used, sticks and fists are raised; and at this time Determination shows himself in his true character. While fifty yelling scoundrels are bawling at and threatening him, he stands perfectly unmoved, save perhaps

that he thrusts on his hat a little tighter, and clenches that under-jaw a little more firmly; but he never flinches from word or threat, and tells King that if he is not fighting in twenty minutes, he, Determination, as referee, will give the day in favour of the other man. This threat—which he has, it appears, the power to carry out—has proper effect, and King's friends yield; one of them, in a loud voice, swearing that if the referee don't act fair he'll be murdered. This pleasant piece of badinage I heard uttered.

The ring is once more cleared of all save the Millers and their seconds, and the excitement re-commences. Greeted by a loud burst of applause, Heenan steps forward. He is stripped to the waist, wearing drawers fastening at the knee, long stockings, and ankle-jack boots with spiked soles. I suppose a finer picture of a man has scarcely ever been seen. As he draws himself up with somewhat of a swagger, and holds his arms aloft in the air, you can see horny muscle working like steel beneath his skin, which is hard, brown, and polished like hickory. In another minute a shout of welcome is given to King, who stands up in similar guise. He is nearly an inch

taller than Heenan, who stands 6 feet $1\frac{1}{2}$, but he weighs a stone less than the American, and he looks greyhoundy and thin, as though his training had been a little too fine. Now they shake hands rapidly, and fall into position.

I have never before seen a prize-fight, but I am an old attendant at the sparring-schools, and have some practical as well as theoretical knowledge of the "noble art;" and it strikes me at once that Mr. Heenan is sadly ignorant of the proper way to use his hands. In the first round he showed this, and also exposed his course of tactics, which was to wrestle with his antagonist, to hug him, and—if the truth must be told—to break his neck. Heenan wrestles splendidly; his grip is something tremendous, and he hurled King about with a force and ease that was surprising. Heenan's backers were enthusiastic, and called out that the fight was as good as over. It was curious to watch the two men throughout the contest. Heenan always first up to time, and, during all the first rounds, smiling, confident, and swaggering: King very anxious-looking, with knit brows to shade his eyes from the sun, and close-set teeth. King fought, Heenan wrestled; King fought him off, Heenan gripped

* him again and again, and after each grip threw him heavily to the ground. Meanwhile the shouts from the spectators were terrific: immediately behind me stood a raving knot of Heenan's friends, who, not content with cheering their champion, heaped clouds of invective and ridicule on his adversary. When King got one tremendous fall—so tremendous that he lay without motion, even when carried to his corner, and I thought he was dead—these ruffians jeered him with twofold fury; and even that incarnation of English virtue, Mr. Thomas Sayers, turned round, and pointing at the senseless body, uttered some graceful sarcasm. But King revived, partly through the application of a bowl of water to his head, partly through another application of a more practical nature, and with his revival came new fortune. All throughout, his friends had been urging him to keep Heenan off, and to make him fight; and now he took the advice. In the next round he struck Heenan a blow into which he had put all his strength, and in delivering which he seemed to concentrate his pent-up rage and humiliation. It did its work; utterly devoid of science, Heenan made no attempt to stop it, and it told on his whole frame.

He came up again, time after time, with a pluck and endurance which cannot be too highly praised; but he was all abroad; the play of his hands was feeble in the extreme, and he was prevented from attempting his old tactics of gripping and hugging by King's powerful fists, which were shooting out all round him with the force of steam-hammers. Heenan was too courageous; he should have given in at least two rounds before the sponge was thrown up and King declared the victor, after a fiercely-contested fight, lasting thirty-five minutes.

So ended my first and last experience of the mysteries of the Millers and their men. I never wish to attend another celebration; but in all honesty I am bound to say that what I did see was by no means so horrifying, so lowering, so disgusting, as before and since I have heard it described. When I read the account of what I had seen, in the next day's *Times*, I really wondered which I ought to believe—my own eyesight or the vivid description of the *Times* reporter!

CHAPTER IV.

CASE FOR THE PROSECUTION.

I WAS staying out of town by the sea, where I always do my own marketing; and, as the buttermilk man made a little funnel of paper in which to enclose my two new-laid eggs, I saw a roll of yellow manuscript in faded ink lying in the drawer. "What's that?" I asked. "Waste," he replied. "May I look at it?" "Welcome;" and he brought it out. A large roll of extra-size law-paper, marked outside "Old Bailey, July Session 1782; Middlesex. The King against George Weston and Joseph Weston, for felony. Brief for the prosecutor."

"Where did you get this?" I asked. "Come with the rest," he said; "pounds of it down stairs; nigh enough to fill my back cellar!" It was very tempting. I had no books save the half-dozen I had brought with me, and which I knew by heart; the evenings were dull and showery; I was getting horribly bored for want of something to read. "Will

you sell me this roll of paper?" said I. "No; I'll gie 'em to ye," was his spirited response.

I carried the roll of paper home, and saw my landlady glance at it with undisguised horror as she observed it under my arm. Then, after I had dined, and the evening, as usual, had turned out showery, and nobody was left on the esplanade save the preventive man, wrapped in his oilskin coat, wearing his sou'-wester hat, and always looking through his telescope for something which never arrived,—I lighted my reading candles, feathery with the corpses of self-immolated moths, and proceeded to look over my newly-found treasure. Very old, very yellow, very flyblown. Here is the heading of the first side: "Old Bailey. July Session, 1782. For Felony. Brief for the prosecution" (each item underscored), in the left-hand corner. In the right-hand, and kept together by a pen-and-ink coupling figure, "The King——" (so grand that they could not put anybody else in the same line, and are obliged to fill it up with a long stroke) "against George Weston, o'wise Samuel Watson, and Joseph Weston, o'wise Joseph Williams Weston, o'wise William Johnson." Then follow six-and-twenty counts

of indictment, and then comes the "case," whence I cull the facts of the story I am about to tell.

Between two and three o'clock on the morning of Monday, the 29th of January 1781, the mail-cart bringing what was called the Bristol mail, with which it had been laden at Maidenhead, and which it should eventually have deposited at the London General Post-office, then in Lombard-street, was jogging easily along towards Cranford Bridge, between the eleventh and twelfth milestone, when the postboy, a sleepy-headed and sickly young fellow (he died very shortly after the robbery), was wakened by the sudden stopping of his horses. Opening his eyes, he found himself confronted by a single highwayman, who presented a pistol at his head, and bade him get down from the cart. Half asleep, and considerably more than half terrified, the boy obeyed, slipped down, and glared vacantly about him. The robber, seeing some indecision in his young friend's face, kindly recalled him to himself by touching his forehead with the cold barrel of the pistol, then ordered him to return back towards Cranford Bridge, and not to look round if he valued his life. Such

a store did the poor boy place upon this commodity, which even then was daily slipping from him, that he implicitly obeyed the robber's directions, and never turned his head until he reached the post-office at Hounslow, where he made up for lost time by giving a lusty alarm.

Hounslow Heath being at that time a very favourite spot for highway robberies, it was by no means uncommon for the denizens of Hounslow town to be roused out of their beds with stories of attack. On this occasion, finding that the robbers had had the impudence to lay their sacrilegious hands on his Majesty's mail, the Hounslowians turned out with a will, and were speedily scouring the country in different directions. Those who went towards the place where the boy had been stopped, hit upon the right scent. They tracked the wheels of the cart on the road leading from the great high road to Heston, and thence to the Uxbridge road, a short distance along that road towards London, and then along a branch-road to the left leading to Ealing Common, about a mile from which, in a field at a distance of eight or ten miles from where the boy was robbed, lay the mail-cart, thrown on

its side and gutted of its contents. The bags from Bath and Bristol for London had been rifled, many of the letters had been broken open, the contents taken away, and the outside covers were blowing about the field. About twenty-eight letter-bags had been carried off bodily; some distance down the field was found the Reading letter-bag, rifled of its contents. Expresses were at once sent off to head-quarters; consternation in the City was very great; and advertisements, giving an account of the robbery and offering a reward, were immediately printed, and distributed throughout the kingdom.

About nine o'clock on Tuesday morning the 30th of January (before any account of the robbery could have arrived at Nottingham), a post-chaise rattled into the yard of the Black Moor's Head in that town, and a gentleman in a naval uniform alighted and requested to be shown to a room. In this room he had scarcely settled himself, before he rang the bell, and despatched the waiter to the bank of Messrs. Smith to obtain cash for several Bristol bills which he handed to him. Messrs. Smith declining these bills without some further statement, the gentleman in the naval

uniform started forth himself, and called at the counting-house of Messrs. Wright, old-established bankers in Nottingham, where he requested cash for a bank post-bill, No. 11,062, dated 10th of January 1781, payable to Matthew Humphrys, Esq., and duly endorsed by Matthew Humphrys, but by no one else. Mr. Wright, the senior partner, peered over his gold spectacles at the gentleman in the naval uniform, and wished to know if he were Mr. Humphrys? As the naval gentleman replied in the negative, Mr. Wright requested him to endorse the bill, which the naval gentleman did, writing "James Jackson" in a rather feeble and illiterate scrawl, but receiving cash for his bill. Immediately on his return to the hotel, the naval gentleman ordered a post-chaise and left Nottingham on an agreeable trip to Mansfield, Chesterfield, Sheffield, Leeds, Wakefield, Tadcastor, York, Northallerton, Darlington, Durham, Newcastle, and Carlisle; at each and every one of which places—such were his needs—the naval gentleman had to go to the bankers, and obtain cash for bills which he presented. Leaving Carlisle he departed by the direct road for London, and was not heard of for some days.

But so soon as the government advertisement arrived in Nottingham, the ingenious Mr. Wright was suddenly struck with an idea, and concluded (by a remarkable exercise of his intellectual forces) that the naval gentleman and the robber of the mail-cart were one and the same person. So he caused handbills descriptive of the naval gentleman's appearance to be printed and circulated, and he sent out several persons in pursuit of the purloiner of his hundred pounds. Amongst other places, a number of handbills were sent to Newark by stage-coach on Thursday the 1st of February, addressed to Mr. Clarke, the postmaster, who also kept the Saracen's Head Inn. Unfortunately this parcel was not opened until about noon on Friday the 2d of February; but the moment Mr. Clarke read one of the notices, he recollected that a gentleman in naval uniform had, about four hours before, arrived from Tuxford at his house in a chaise and four, had got change from him for a bank-note of 25*l.*, and had immediately started in another chaise and four for Grantham.

Now was a chance to catch the naval gentleman before he reached London, and an instant pursuit was commenced; but the devil

stood his friend so far, for he reached town about three hours before his pursuers. His last change was at Enfield Highway, whence a chaise and four carried him to town, and set him down in Bishopsgate Street between ten and eleven on Friday night. The postboys saw him get into a hackney-coach, taking his pistols and portmanteau with him; but they could not tell the number of the coach, nor where he directed the coachman to drive.

Having thus traced the highwayman to London, of course no one could then dream of taking any further steps towards his apprehension without consulting "the public office, Bow Street," in the matter; and at the public office, Bow Street, the affair was placed in the hands of one Mr. John Clark, who enjoyed great reputation as a clever "runner." Mr. John Clark's first act was to issue a reward for the appearance of the hackney-coachman; an act which was so effectual that, on Monday morning, there presented himself at Bow Street an individual named James Perry, who said that he was the coachman in question, and deposed that the person whom he had conveyed in his coach the Friday night preceding was one George Weston, whom he well

knew, having been a fellow-lodger of his at the sign of the Coventry Arms in Potter's Fields, Tooley Street, about four months ago. He also said that Weston ordered him to drive to the first court on the left hand in Newgate Street, where he set him down; Weston walking through the court with his portmanteau and pistols under his arm. Further information than this James Perry could not give. On Tuesday the 6th of February, a coat and waistcoat, similar to those worn by the naval gentleman implicated in these transactions, were found in "Pimlico river, near Chelsea Waterworks," by one John Sharp; and finally, Mr. Clark, of the public office, Bow Street, in despair at his want of success, advertised George Weston by name. But, although a large number of notes and bills were "put off" or passed between that time and the month of November, not the least trace could be had of him. Mr. Clark, of the public office, Bow Street, owned himself done at last; and so, in the pleasant round of highway robberies, foot-paderies, burglaries, and murders, the affair was almost forgotten.

In the middle of the month of October, a gentleman dressed (of course) in the height

of the mode, entered the shop of Messrs. Elliott and Davis, upholsterers, in New Bond Street, accompanied by an intimate friend, whom he addressed as Mr. Samuel Watson. The gentleman's own name was William Johnson; he had, as he informed the upholsterers, recently taken a house and some land near Winchelsea, and he wished them to undertake the furnishing of his house. The upholsterers, like cautious tradesmen, requested "a reference;" which Mr. Johnson at once gave them in Mr. Hanson, a tradesman residing also in New Bond Street. Mr. Hanson, on being applied to, said that Mr. Johnson had bought goods of him to the amount of 70*l.*, and had paid ready money. Messrs. Elliott and Davis were perfectly satisfied, and professed their readiness to execute Mr. Johnson's orders. Mr. Johnson's orders to the upholsterers were to "let him have every thing suitable for a man of 500*l.* a year, an amount which he possessed in estates in Yorkshire, independent of the allowance made to him by his father, who had been an eminent attorney in Birmingham, but had retired upon a fortune of 2,000*l.* a year." Elliott and Davis took Mr. Johnson at his word, and completed the order in style;

then, about the middle of January the junior partner started for Winchelsea, and took the bill with him. Like a prudent man he put up at the inn, and made inquiries about his debtor. Nothing could be more satisfactory. Mr. Johnson lived with the best people of the county; Mr. Johnson went everywhere, and was a most affable, liberal, pleasant gentleman. So when Mr. Davis saw Mr. Johnson, and that affable gentleman begged him, as a personal favour, to defer the presentation of his little account until March, he at once concurred, and returned to London, to give Elliott a glowing account of his reception, and to inspire him with a certain amount of jealousy that he—Elliott—had not taken the account himself. March came, but Johnson's money came not: instead thereof a letter from Johnson, stating that his rents would be due on the 25th of that month, that he did not like to hurry his tenants, but that he would be in town the first or second week in April, and discharge the bill. Reading this epistle, Elliott looked stern, and was secretly glad he had *not* been to Winchelsea; while Davis, glancing over it, was secretly sorry he had said so much.

While the partners were in this state, in the second week of April, no money having in the mean time been forthcoming, enter to them a neighbour, Mr. Timothy Lucas, jeweller, who gives them good-day, and then wants to know their opinion of one Mr. Johnson, of Winchelsea. "Why?" asked the terrified upholsterers. Simply because he had given their firm as reference to the jeweller, who had already sold him, on credit, goods to the amount of 130*l.*, and had just executed an order for 800*l.* worth of jewelry, which was then packed and ready to be sent to Winchelsea. Now consternation reigned in New Bond Street. Johnson's debts to Elliott and Davis were above 370*l.*; to Lucas above 130*l.* Immediate steps must be adopted; so writs were at once taken out, and the London tradesmen, accompanied by a sheriff's officer, set out to Winchelsea to meet their defrauder.

Early on Monday morning the 15th of April, as they were passing through Rye, on their way, they observed Mr. Johnson and his intimate friend Mr. Samuel Watson coming towards them on horseback, escorting a chariot, within which were two ladies, and behind which was a groom on horseback.

Davis, the trusting, conscious of having temporarily nourished a snake in his upholstering bosom, pointed out Johnson to the sheriff's officer, who immediately rode up to arrest him, and was as immediately knocked down by Johnson with the butt-end of his riding-whip. The tradesmen rushed to their officer's assistance, but Johnson and Watson beat them off; and Watson, drawing a pistol, swore he would blow their brains out. This so checked the upholstering ardour, that Johnson and Watson managed to escape, returned in great haste to Winchelsea, where they packed their plate and valuables, and made off at full speed across country, leaving directions for the ladies to follow them to London in the chariot.

Clearly the London tradesmen were non-plused; clearly the thing for them to do was, to consult with the mayor and principal tradesmen of the town; clearly the place for the consultation was the coffee-room of the Nag's Head. In a corner of this coffee-room lay a ne'er-do-weel, a pot-house loiterer, a tap-room frequenter, a man with the reputation of having once had brains which he had muddled away with incessant brandy-and-water.

“Jack” he was called; and if he had one peculiarity besides brandy-and-water, which was scarcely a peculiarity in Rye, it was his intense interest in all criminal matters. So, the tradesmen talked, and Jack listened, until they had given a description of the person of Mr. William Johnson, when Jack went away to the den which he called home, and, returning, requested to hear Mr. Johnson’s appearance again described. Mr. Davis, the junior partner, looking upon Jack as a harmless lunatic, complied with the request. Jack gave a yell of delight, and, producing from under his ragged coat the hand-bill issued from the public office, Bow Street, speedily showed that Mr. Johnson of Winchelsea, and George Weston, the mail-robber, were one and the same person.

No sooner proved than action taken. Off goes an express to the post-office. Mr. John Clark is torn from the bosom of his family and summoned to the public office, whence he despatches trusty satellites, with the result that Mr. Johnson, with his intimate friend Mr. Watson, are traced from various places to an hotel in Noel Street, near Wardour Street, Soho, where they slept on Tuesday night.

Early on Wednesday morning, indefatigable Mr. John Clark, duly apprised, is at the door of the Noel Street hotel, relates to the landlord his errand, and requests the landlord's assistance; which the landlord refuses. Clark sends a bystander off to Bow Street for assistance, and the landlord proceeds to caution his guests, who immediately take alarm, and come slouching down stairs with their hands in their pockets. Clark, who is standing at the door, does not like their attitude, thinks it safest to let them pass, but as soon as they are fairly in the street, gives the alarm, "Stop thief! Stop mail robbers!" Out rushes a crowd in hot pursuit—pursuit which is temporarily checked by Messrs. Johnson and Watson each producing a brace of pistols, and firing three shots at their followers; but at last they are both captured.

So far my yellow-leaved, fly-blown, faded brief-sheets, which tell me, moreover, that George Weston and Joseph Weston are the Johnson and Watson of the Winchelsea drama; that they will be proved to be brothers; that George Weston will be proved to be the highwayman, and Joseph the receiver; and that there is a perfect cloud of witnesses ready to

prove every indictment. I suppose they did prove it; for, turning back to the first outside folio, I find, in a different handwriting and a later ink, "Guilty"—to be hanged at Tyburn—May 3; and later still I see an ink cross, which, from official experience, I know to be a record that the last memorandum had been carried out, and that the papers might be put by.

CHAPTER V.

CASE FOR THE PRISONER.

AT six o'clock on Monday morning the 29th of January 1827, the Dover mail-coach, mud-bespattered and travel-stained, pulled up before the General Post-Office in Lombard Street, and the official porters in attendance flung themselves upon it, and dragged from it the receptacle for letters (then containing correspondence from France, from foreign countries transmitting through France, and from Dover itself), which, in official language, was known as the mail-portmanteau. The guard, cold, stiff, and tired, tumbled off his perch, stamped his feet on the pavement, yawned, stretched himself, and literally "lent a hand" towards the removal of the mail-portmanteau by just touching it in its descent with his four fingers; the coachman, also cold, stiff, and tired, let his benumbed left hand give to the motion of the four jaded horses, which, dank and steaming, stretched their necks, and yawned

about with their heads, and shook their bodies, rattling their harness in a dismal manner. All the passengers had dismounted long ago, the guard had stepped inside the office to settle some little matter in connexion with the way-bill, the few stragglers always waiting about to see the coaches come in had been cheaply edified and were moving off, the coachman had jerked the horses' heads into the air preparatory to walking them round to the stable, when a pale-faced clerk with a pen behind his ear came rushing out of the little side-door, tumbling over the guard, and exclaiming, "Hold hard, for God's sake! The mail has been robbed!"

When the two official porters carried the mail-portmanteau into the Foreign Office of the General Post-Office, they placed it before the clerk waiting to receive it. There was little time to count and sort and despatch the letters; the clerk knew that in order to get through his work he must have quick eyes and nimble fingers; and in a minute he had unbuckled the straps of the square portmanteau and thrown them back, preparatory to opening the two compartments, when in each of the compartments he saw a long cut, as

with a knife, large enough to admit of the enclosed bags being drawn out. Rather staggered at this, the clerk hastily turned all the bags out on to the floor, noticing as he did so that several of them were cut and frayed. Then he looked for the Paris letter-bill, which he found in due course, and read as follows:—
“No. 203. Direction Générale des Postes de France. Départ de Paris pour Londres, ce Vendredi, 26 Janvier, année 1827. Le contenu de votre dernière dépêche du 24^{me} a été exactement distribué, et ultérieurement expédié pour sa destination : l’administration vous demande le même soin pour le contenu de la présente du reçu, de laquelle vous voudrez bien lui donner avis.” Then followed a list of the bags and their weights, from France, Italy, Spain and Portugal, Switzerland, Germany, and Turkey. The clerk carefully compared the bill in his hand with the bags lying before him, and instantly found that the Italian bag, the heaviest, and probably therefore the most valuable, was missing.

The pale-faced clerk, rushing out and communicating this fact to the coachman and overturned guard (when he was picked up) of the Dover mail-coach, had the satisfaction

of seeing their rubicund countenances turn to his own hue; but with that he was obliged to remain content, as they merely invoked different species of condemnation on various portions of their anatomy if they knew any thing about it, or could tell how it occurred. So the Dover mail-coach went round to its stables. That night, when the return Dover mail left the Elephant and Castle, it had for one of its inside passengers the solicitor to the General Post-Office; a man of clear head and prompt action, to whom the investigation of delicate matters connected with the postal service was confided. To him, comfortably installed at the Ship Hotel, came the postmaster of Calais and the Captain of the *Henri Quatre*, the French packet by which the mail had been brought over. After a little consultation, these gentlemen were clearly of opinion that the mail arrived intact at Calais, was sent thence and arrived intact at Dover, was sent thence intact, and was violated on the road to London. Tending to the proof of this was a special circumstance. When the mail arrived at Dover, it was so unusually heavy as to induce a Custom-house officer who saw it landed to regard it with suspicion; so he accompanied the men

who bore it, from the French vessel to the packet-agent's office, that he might see it opened, and be satisfied that it contained nothing prohibited. The portmanteau was unbuckled and its compartments were thrown open in the presence of this officer, of Sir Thomas Coates the packet-agent, and of three other persons, all of whom were certain that the compartments of the bags were in a perfect state, and that the bags were then uncut.

So far so good. In such cases proving a negative is the next best thing to positive proof, because it shuts the gate and prevents your wandering in the wrong direction. So the solicitor to the Post-Office, journeying back to London, and taking up the threads of his case on the way, stopped at Canterbury, made a few casual inquiries, pricked up his ears, opened a regular official investigation, and received what he believed to be very important information. For it appeared that on the Sunday night of the robbery, four inside and three outside passengers left Dover by the mail-coach for London. The four insides were booked for London; one of the outsides was booked for Chatham, another for Canterbury or as much further towards London as

he pleased, the third outside intimated that he should only go as far as Canterbury. When the mail reached the Fountain Inn, Canterbury, the outside passenger who was booked as far towards London as he pleased, got down and paid his fare, stating that he should go no further; the passenger who was booked for Canterbury alighted at the same time; and the two walked away from the coach together.

One of the mail-coach proprietors, who resided at Canterbury, happened to be looking at the mail while it was standing at the door on the evening in question, and observed two men, dressed as if they had just left the coach, crossing the street. They stood consulting together for a few minutes, and, after walking about fifty yards, stopped again, when a third man joined them. They all conversed for about a minute, and then separated; two of them went down the street on the road to London, the mail passed them, and almost immediately afterwards they returned up the street in the direction of the Rose Hotel. The third man went into the coach-office, booked himself as an outside passenger for London, and went on by the mail. Shortly after the mail passed through Canterbury that night,

two strangers coming from the direction in which the mail had gone, entered the Rose Hotel, and ordered a chaise to London. On being asked whether they would change horses at Ospringe or Sittingbourn, they said it was immaterial so long as they got on quickly. The waiter who showed them into a sitting-room noticed that they had a small bag with them. They ordered some brandy-and-water and shut themselves in—in the room, not the bag. After the lapse of a quarter of an hour the waiter, suddenly opening the door to say that the chaise was ready, perceived various letters (at least twenty or thirty), and several small paper packets, lying on the table; the men were feeling the letters, holding them up to the candles, and otherwise examining their contents. They appeared much confused when the waiter entered the room, crammed the letters into their pockets, paid their bill, got into the chaise, and at once set off for town.

The thieves were traced through different stages, until it was ascertained that they had been set down between six and seven o'clock on Monday morning near a watch-box in the Kent Road, and that, having paid the post-

boy, they then walked off towards Surrey Square.

So much notice was taken of the men at the Rose Hotel, and at the places where they stopped to change horses and take refreshment on the road to town, that a description of their persons was procured, and the police communicated with. On hearing the description, the police at once considered that it implicated one Tom Partridge, and one of his associates, who had been concerned in most of the coach-robberies which had recently been committed ; and private information having been obtained that these were really the men who had violated the mail, warrants were obtained, and Tom Partridge was "wanted." After a search of many weeks Tom Partridge was apprehended, and, on the examination which he underwent at Bow Street, was distinctly identified as one of the persons who booked an outside place at Dover by the mail of the evening in question, and as one of the men who were seen on the same evening at the Rose Hotel examining letters and packets which lay open before them. On this evidence Mr. Tom Partridge was fully committed for trial.

From March till August Mr. Tom Partridge lay in prison: immediately on his committal, he had strongly denied his guilt, and had made application to be admitted to bail; but his request was refused. On the 21st of August 1827, the assizes for the Home Circuit being then held in Maidstone, there was more than usual excitement round the old courthouse of that town. Very many witnesses were to be examined on the part of the Crown, among them some French gentlemen, clerks in the Paris Post-Office, and officers of the packet, who had been staying at the principal hotel of Maidstone for some days, and at the expense of the prosecution; who had lived very freely, and had winked at the cherry-cheeked Kentish damsels in a manner which had caused some of those young girls to clench their fists and hint at giving "furriners" that dread blow known as a "smack o' th' face." And above all else productive of interest was the prevalent belief that the whole case was one of extraordinary circumstantial evidence; that it would turn upon the nicest question of personal identity; and that the prisoner intended bringing forward undeniable proofs of his innocence.

So the cramped little court was crowded from floor to ceiling when the learned judge took his seat on the bench. Immediately below him sat the Post-Office solicitor, outwardly bland, but inwardly anxious: betraying his anxiety when there seemed any hitch in his case by repeated application to a massive gold snuff-box. From time to time he conferred with the crown-counsel on his right hand, and occasionally answered questions put to him by two old gentlemen on his left, London merchants and bankers. More than the average number of counsel (none appearing for the prisoner though) at the little green table appropriated to them, and though sitting with wigs cocked awry and employing themselves generally in the mastication of quill pens, yet paying more than usual attention to a case in which they were not concerned. All round the court, wherever permissible, stood the eager public, stout broad-shouldered yeomen, buxom women, ostlers, and inn-yard loiterers, with occasionally among them the thin sallow face of a London "professional," probably a friend of the prisoner, contrasting strongly with the acres of broad healthy red cheeks by which it was surrounded. The pri-

soner himself in the dock fronting my lord the judge, a middle-sized stoutly-built man, with a queer humorous face, lighted by a twinkling arch blue eye. Not a bit daunted, but apparently rather pleased by the universal gaze, he stood leaning over the front of the dock, playing with the bits of herbs which custom still retained there, keenly observant of all that transpired, but apparently fully trusting in his own resources.

The judge settled himself in his seat, the usher demanded "Silence" at a moment when a pin might have been heard to drop, each juryman threw every scrap of intellect at his command into his countenance, the Post-Office solicitor took an enormous pinch of snuff, and Mr. Serjeant Strongbow, retained on behalf of the Crown, rose to address the court. He told the story briefly, pretty much as it has been here stated, and proceeded to call his witnesses. First came the French gentlemen. M. Etienne Bonheur, comptroller at the foreign office of the General Post-Office, Paris, proved that he made up the mail for London on the evening of Friday the 26th of January, that there was an Italian bag, that he handed them to M. Avier to despatch. M. Avier, M. Gus-

tave d'Ortell postmaster of Calais, Captain Margot of the *Henri Quatre* steamer, John Nash the Custom-house officer at Dover, and Sir T. Coates the packet-agent, all deposed to the despatch and receipt of the mail in due course. Rather dull work this. So the judge thought, leaning back and biting his nails; so the jury thought, listening in bucolic wonder to the translation of the French witnesses' evidence by the interpreter, but bored when it came out in English a mere matter of formal routine connected with the transmission of a mail; so the prisoner thought, as he shifted from leg to leg, and smiled slightly once or twice, looking on with great unconcern. Booking-office keeper at Dover, mail-coachman, coach-proprietor at Canterbury, waiter and chambermaid at the Rose Hotel, waiters and ostlers all along the road, up they came one after the other, kissed the book, looked at the prisoner in the dock, and declared that he was the man who figured in their recollection as connected with the events of the night of the 28th of January. At the conclusion of this evidence, the court adjourns for refreshment; judge goes out at a side-door; prisoner wipes his forehead, and sits down by his

guardian turnkey; Post-Office solicitor takes a pinch of snuff and receives congratulations of London bankers on manner in which evidence had been got together; Serjeant Strongbow says, "Seems clear case," and commences sandwich.

After an interval of twenty minutes, the court resumed, Serjeant Strongbow intimated that the case for the prosecution was concluded, and the prisoner, called upon for his defence, humbly prayed that a written paper which he had prepared might be read aloud. The court assenting, the paper was handed to an officer, and was read aloud, to the following effect. In the first place, the prisoner denied any participation in the crime of which he was accused, and stated that in the month of January last he was travelling with a person of the name of Trotter, on business, in the counties of Somerset and Devon. That on Monday the 22d January, he and Trotter arrived at the George Inn, Glastonbury, kept by Mr. Booth. That they left the George the same day, and went to Mr. Baker's, who keeps an inn at Somerton, and thence in Mr. Baker's gig to Yeovil. That the prisoner, taking a fancy to the horse in this gig, sent word back

to Mr. Baker that if he had a mind to sell it, he (prisoner) would meet him at the George Inn, Glastonbury, on the ball-night, the Thursday following. That on this Thursday night the prisoner and Trotter duly arrived at the George, bought Baker's horse for twelve guineas twelve shillings, borrowing the silver money from Booth, tried it on the Friday morning, and left it with Booth to get it into better condition. That he (prisoner) and Trotter left Glastonbury at half-past eleven on Saturday morning the 27th, by the Exeter coach, which they quitted on the road about five miles from Tiverton, and walked on to that town. That at Tiverton they put up at the Three Tuns Hotel, and being cold, they called for and had some hot egg-beer on their arrival; and that while at this hotel, having a wish to procure some clotted cream, they inquired of the waiter how they should carry it, when the waiter recommended them to have two tin cans for the purpose, which cans were procured and filled accordingly. That they stayed at the Three Tuns during Saturday the 27th, and Sunday the 28th; and left on Monday the 29th, by the Bristol coach to Bridgewater.

This statement of the prisoner's having been read aloud, he was called upon to corroborate it by evidence. Thereupon he summoned and produced in the witness-box, one after the other, Booth, the landlord of the George at Glastonbury; Baker, of whom he bought the horse; Ellis, the waiter at the Three Tuns at Tiverton, who produced the book containing the entries of the refreshment had by the prisoner—among them the hot egg-beer, the clotted cream, and the tins for carrying it; and the chambermaid at the same inn. All of these persons exactly corroborated the prisoner's statement, and all of them swore positively to his identity. After the evidence of the last witness the judge interposed and asked the Crown counsel whether he desired to press his case? Serjeant Strongbow turned to the Post-Office solicitor, who, with a pinch of snuff suspended in the air, was gravely shaking his head, when several of the jury expressed themselves satisfied that the witnesses for the prosecution were mistaken, and that the prisoner was not one of the persons who had committed the robbery. Whereupon a verdict of acquittal was recorded; and with a smiling face and a bow to the court Mr.

Tom Partridge walked out of the dock a free man.

Some two years after this trial, which gave rise to a vast amount of wonder as to how the government could have been so mistaken as to prosecute an innocent man, the Post-Office solicitor, wending his way quietly along Bishopsgate Street to catch the Norwood coach at the Flower-Pot Inn, was brushed against by a man going into a public-house, and looking up, saw that the man was Tom Partridge. Now, in Mr. Solicitor's leisure moments, which were few enough, he had often thought of Tom Partridge, and had puzzled his brain ineffectually for a solution of Tom Partridge's mystery. So now, having a few minutes to spare, he first satisfied himself that the man who had brushed against him was the veritable Tom, and then crossed the street and took a careful survey of the public-house into which Tom had vanished. As he stood looking up at the house Tom came out of the street-door, looked up, and called "Hi!" whereupon, from an upper window of the house, appeared the head and shoulders of another Tom, an exact reproduc-

tion of the original Tom, middle-sized, stoutly built, with a queer humorous face lighted by a twinkling arch blue eye. Mr. Solicitor rubbed his eyes and took a stinging pinch of snuff; but when he looked again, there were the two Tom Partridges, exactly alike, one on the pavement in the street, the other looking out of the third-floor window. Then both disappeared into the house, whence presently emerging both by the street-door, one pointed to some distant object, and the other started off up the street, the first returning into the public-house; each so exactly like the other, that, when they separated, they looked like halves of one body.

Mr. Solicitor took a short joyous pinch, rubbed his hands slowly, and went off to the Flower-Pot Inn. That evening he had several extra glasses of a peculiarly fine brown sherry which he only drank on special occasions; and Mrs. Solicitor remarked to the Misses Solicitor that she thought father must have had a very good case on somewhere, he was in such spirits. Next morning Mr. Solicitor was closeted for half an hour with one of the heads of the Post-Office department who had the official conduct of criminal cases; and shortly after-

wards a confidential messenger was despatched with a letter to William Barker, otherwise known as Conkey Barker, otherwise as Bill the Nobbler, otherwise as sundry and divers flash personages.

That evening Mr. La Trappe, of the General Post-Office, sat in the study of his private house in Brunswick Square. On the desk before him stood his despatch-box, a cutting from a newspaper, a lawyer's brief with some official tape-tied papers. A case-bottle of brandy, a tumbler, and a water-bottle, stood on the corner of the desk. As the clock struck eight, the servant entered and announced "a man." The man being admitted proved very velveteeny, slightly stably, and very bashful.

"Sit down, Barker," said Mr. La Trappe, pointing to a chair. "I sent for you, because I discovered that the last time you were here you left something behind you ——"

"The devil!" burst out Mr. Barker.

"Oh, don't fear," said Mr. La Trappe, smiling gently, and looking at him with a peculiar glance, "it was only this letter. You needn't open it; you'll find that it's all right."

Mr. Barker took the letter with some misgiving; then a light gradually dawning on him he crumpled it softly in his palm; a responsive crinkling of crisp enclosure fell upon his ear, and he chuckled as he said, "All right, sir; I'm fly!"

"Mix yourself a glass of grog, Barker," said Mr. La Trappe, pointing to the case-bottle. "You've entirely left the profession, I believe?"

"Entirely, sir."

"And are leading an honest life?"

"Reg'lar slap-up 'spectable mechanic," said Barker.

"I want a little information from you; it can't hurt anybody, as the affair is bygone and blown. Do you recollect the robbery of the Dover mail?"

"I should think so," said Barker, grinning very much.

"Ah!" said Mr. La Trappe. "We tried a man named Tom Partridge for it, and he was acquitted on an alibi. He did it, of course?"

"Of course," said Barker.

"Ah!" said Mr. La Trappe again, with perfect calmness; "he has a double, who went

into Somerset and Devon at the same time, and worked the oracle for him?"

"Well! How *did* you find that out?"

"Never mind, Barker, how I found it out. What I want to know is—who is the double?"

"Tom Partridge's brother—old Sam, one year older nor Tom, and as like him as two peas. It was the best rig o' the sort as ever was rigged. Old Sam had been out in Ameriky all his life, and when he first came back, every one was talking about his likeness to Tom; you couldn't know 'em apart. Fiddy, the fence, thought something might be made of this, and he planned the whole job—the egg-hot, and the cream, the tins, and the horse what he bought. Tom's got that horse now, to drive in his shay-cart on Sundays, and he calls him 'Walker.'"

"Walker!" said Mr. La Trappe; "what does he call him Walker for?"

"Walker's a slang name for a postman," explained Mr. Barker, in great delight. "Worn't it per-rime?"

"Oh!" said Mr. La Trappe, with great gravity, "I perceive. One more question, Barker; how was the robbery effected? The interior of the portmanteau could not have

been cut unless it had been unbuckled and the compartments thrown open, and they could not possibly have done all that on the top of the coach. Besides, the guard stated he had fastened it in a very peculiar manner at Dover, and that the fastenings were in exactly the same state when he opened it in London."

"Ah! That was the best game of the lot," said Mr. Barker. "The job was done while the portmanteau was in the agent's office at Dover, and where it lay from three o'clock on Sunday afternoon till between seven and eight in the evening. Tom Partridge and his pal, they opened the street-door with a skeleton key; there was no one there, and they had plenty of time to work it."

"And Tom Partridge's pal was ——?"

"Ah, that I can't say," said Mr. Barker, looking straight into the air. "I never heard tell o' *his* name."

"Thanks, Barker; that'll do," said Mr. La Trappe, rising. "Good night! You've done no harm. I shall know where to find you if ever I want you again."

About a twelvemonth afterwards that slap-up respectable mechanic, Mr. William Barker, was hanged for horse-stealing. Just before

his execution he sent for Mr. La Trappe, and confessed that *he* had been Tom Partridge's accomplice in the robbery of the Dover mail. Mr. La Trappe thanked him for the information, but bore it like a man who could bear a surprise.

CHAPTER VI.

PINCHER ASTRAY.

HE was not handsome—at least in the common acceptation of the term. He had a speckly muzzle and a hanging jowl, and rather watery eyes, and short crop ears. His legs were horribly bowed, and his tail curled over his back like the end of a figure of nine. He was a morose beast, and of most uncertain temper. He would rush out to a stranger at the gate with every demonstration of welcome, would leap up and bark round him, and then would run behind and bite him in the calves. He was the terror of the tradespeople: he loathed the butcher; he had a deadly hatred for the fishmonger's boy; and, when I complained to the post-office of the non-receipt in due course of a letter from my aunt's legal adviser advising me to repair at once to the old lady's death-bed (owing to which non-receipt I was cut out of my aunt's will), I was answered

that "the savage character of my dog—a circumstance with which the department could not interfere—prevented the letter-carrier from the due performance of his functions after nightfall." Still I loved Pincher—still I love him! What though my trousers-ends were frayed into hanging strips by his teeth; what though my slippers are a mass of chewed pulp; what though he has tousled all the corners of the manuscript of my work on Logarithms—shall I reproach him now that he is lost to me? Never!

I saw him last, three mornings ago, leisurely straying round the garden with the strap of the baby's shoe hanging out of his mouth, and with a knowing wag of his tail, as much as to show me how he was enjoying himself. I remonstrated with him on the shoe question, and he seemed somewhat touched for a moment; but suddenly catching sight of a predatory cat on the wall, he galloped off without further parley. I watched the cat scuttle up a tree; I heard Pincher growling angrily at its base; the noise of the milkman's boots scrunching the gravel attracted his attention. He darted off, and was lost to me for ever. There was a fiendish grin on

the housemaid's face when she announced to me that Pincher wasn't nowhere to be found. Visions of henceforth unworried stocking-heels, unsnapped-at ancles, rose before that damsel's mind as she broke the news; and she smiled as she said they'd looked everywhere they had, and nothin' wasn't to be seen. I was not crushed by the intelligence. I knew my dog's extensive visiting-list, and thought that finding he had overstayed his time, he had probably accepted the friendly hospitality of half a kennel, and was then engaged in baying the moon, and conducing to the sleeplessness of a neighbourhood unaccustomed to his vocal powers. But, as I lay in bed in the morning, I missed the various little dramas—the principal characters played by Pincher and the tradespeople—of which I had long been the silent audience. The butcher's boy—a fierce and beefy youth, who openly defied the dog, and waved him off with hurlings of his basket and threatenings of his feet, accompanied by growls of “Git out, yer beast!”—now entered silently; the baker's apprentice, a mild and farinaceous lad—who proffered to Pincher the raspings of black loaves, and usually endeavoured to propitiate his enemy by addressing

him as "Poor fellow!"—now entered silently; the fishmonger—who generally made one wild scuttle from the garden-gate to the kitchen-entrance, and upon whose track Pincher usually hung as the wolves hung upon Mazeppa's—now walked slowly up the path, and whistled. Then I knew that Pincher was gone indeed!

I engaged the services of an unintelligible crier, and had a description of my dog bel-
lowed round the neighbourhood. I brought the printing art into play, to portray Pincher's various attributes, and all the palings and posts within the circle of two miles burst out with an eruption of placards, of which the words "Lost" and "Dog" were, without the aid of a powerful microscope, the only legible portion. I concocted an advertisement for the *Times* newspaper. I patiently waited the result of these various schemes. They had results, I allow. I received at least twenty letters from sympathising persons, who stated that in the event of not recovering my lost favourite, they were in a position to provide another in his place. I suppose that on the evening of the day on which the *Times* issued the advertisement, at least five-and-twenty

pairs of boots had printed themselves off on my dining-room drugget, which, being red in colour and fluffy in texture, is singularly capable of retaining a clear impression. The boots, in every instance, belonged to short-haired stably gentlemen in large white overcoats, from the inner pockets of which they produced specimens of dogs—ugly and morose indeed, but none of them my Pincher.

I need not say that my intimate friends came out nobly under these circumstances. Jephson, who wore check trousers of a vivid pattern which had always aroused Pincher's ire, thanked fortune that "the infernal beast was got rid of somehow." Pooley, who, labouring under a belief that all dogs were intended for swimmers, had once tried to throw Pincher into the Hampstead ponds, and had had his hand bitten to the bone for his pains, hoped that "the brute had been made into sausages." Blinkhorn, who was of a facetious turn, was sure that Pincher had been sewn up in the skin of some deceased dog of fabulous beauty, and sold by a man in Regent Street to some old dowager. Hallmarke was the only one who gave me the least consolation. "Perhaps he's been picked

up by some benevolent person," he said, "and sent to the Home. Go to the Home and see." "The Home? what Home?" I asked. "For lost dogs, at Holloway. Go and see if he's there."

On further sifting this somewhat vague information, I found that there was a place where lost and starving dogs found in the street, were temporarily received and cared for; and that this place was open to the visits of the public. I determined to repair thither at once. It is a good thing for the dogs that they are sent to the Home, for assuredly they would never find their own intricate way there. On being landed from the Favourite omnibus, I made several inquiries, and at last found myself in Hollingsworth Street: a pleasant locality, which would have been pleasanter had there been less mud and more pavement.

I looked around, but saw no sign of dog-giness. At last I succeeded in fixing a red-faced matron who was cuffing her offspring, and of her I inquired, as civilly as might be, if she knew where the Dog's Home was situated? Following this lady's directions, I crossed the road, and soon found myself at the gates, when a sharp little lad, so soon as

he heard my business, ushered me into the Home.

A big yard, at the opposite end of which I see a block of kennels with a wirework fenced show-place outside, very like that appropriated to the monkeys at the Zoological Gardens. In this, a crowd of dogs, who no sooner see the boy accompanying me than they set up a tremendous howling. Not a painful yelping, nothing suggestive of hunger or physical suffering; but simply that under-toned howl which means, "Take me out and give me a run." Dogs of all common kinds here, but nothing very valuable. "Mongrel, puppy, and whelp, and curs of low degree." Big dogs, half-mastiff, half-sheepdog, bastard Scotch and, English terriers, in all instances with a cross of wrong blood in them; one or two that ought to have been beagles, but seemed to have gone to the bad; several lurchers looking as if they ought to have had a poacher's heels to follow, and a grand gathering of the genuine English cur: that cheery, dissipated, dishonest scoundrel, who betrays his villany in the shiftiness of his eye, and the limpness of his tail: who is so often lame, and so perpetually taking furtive snatches of sleep in doorways:

a citizen of the world, and yet a single-hearted brute, who will follow any one for miles on the strength of a kind word, and who, when kicked off, turns round philosophically and awaits some better fortune.

Comfortably housed are all these dogs, with plenty to eat and drink, and a large open space where they are periodically turned out for exercise. I asked whether the neighbours did not raise strong objections to the proximity of the Home? I was told that at first all kinds of legal persecutions were threatened, but that, as time passed, the ill feeling died away, and now no complaints were made. The dogs, who are invariably rescued from starvation, are so worn out on first reaching their new abode, that they invariably sleep for many hours as soon as they have taken food, and, on recovering, seem already accustomed to their quarters, and consequently indisposed to whine. All the dogs of any standing look plump and well fed; but there are two or three new-comers with lacklustre eyes and very painful anatomical developments. I carefully scrutinised them all. There were about eighty. Alas, Pincher was not among them. He might come in, the boy said; there

was many pleaceman bringin' in what they'd found in the night; my dog might come in yet; hadn't I better see the lady and talk to her? I found "the lady" was the originator of the Home, living closely adjacent; and from her I obtained all the particulars of her amiable hobby.

The Home for lost and starving dogs has now been in existence more than three years. The establishment was started by the present honorary secretary: a lady who had for some time been in the habit of collecting such starving animals as she found in her own neighbourhood, and paying a person a weekly sum for their keep. After explaining her plan in the columns of one of the daily newspapers, she received warm assistance, and the co-operation of the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals having been obtained, the Home entered upon its present extended sphere of usefulness, and boasts a large number of annual subscribers. Its object will be gathered from the following

RULES AND REGULATIONS.

1. Any dog found and brought to the Home, if applied for by the owner, will be given up to its master upon payment of the expenses of its keep.

2. Any dogs lost by Subscribers and brought to the Home will be given up free of all expense.

3. Any dog brought to the Home, not identified and claimed within fourteen days from the time of its admission, will, by order of the Committee, be sold to pay expenses, or be otherwise disposed of.

4. To prevent dog-stealing, no reward will be given to persons bringing dogs to the Home. The Committee would hope that, to persons of ordinary humanity, the consciousness of having performed a merciful action would be sufficient recompense.

5. Accommodation is now made for the reception of dogs belonging to Ladies or Gentlemen who may wish to have care taken of them during their absence from home.

Ladies and Gentlemen finding lost or starving dogs in the street, at a distance from their own residences, are recommended to arrange with some poor person, for a specified remuneration, to convey them either to the "Home" itself, or to a receiving house. The money should on no account be given to the bearer of the dog beforehand, or only on production of a certificate in this form :

Temporary Home for Lost and Starving Dogs.

The Bearer has brought _____ dog to the Home.

Date _____

_____, Keeper.

It is scarcely necessary to say that when the scheme was first mooted it shared the fate of many other good schemes, and received violent opposition. People who would have left the wounded traveller and passed by on the other side, declaimed loudly against showing humanity to dogs, while human creatures

were starving; and some humorists pleasantly asked whether there was to be a home for lost and starving elephants. The Home has survived even these sarcasms, and unpretendingly does good; it is not very important in its benevolence, but as no sparrow falls to the ground without an all-wise supervision, it may be granted that the charity which provides food and shelter for a starving dog is worthy of approbation. The place does good in its sphere. To do some good in any sphere, is much better than to do none.

Pincher returned: not from the Home for Lost Dogs, he knew better than so far to jeopardise his social standing. He returned with a ruffled coat, a torn ear, a fierceness of eye which bespoke recent trouble. I afterwards learned that he had been a principal in a combat held in the adjoining parish, where he acquitted himself with a certain amount of honour, and was pinning his adversary, when a rustic person from a farm broke in upon the ring and kicked both the combatants out of it. This ignominy was more than Pincher could bear; he flung himself upon the rustic's leg, and brought him to the ground: then fled,

and remained hidden in a wood until hunger compelled him to come home. We have interchanged no communication since, but regard each other with sulky dignity. I perceive that he intends to remain obdurate until I make the first advances.

CHAPTER VII.

BOYS.

"I ONLY know two sorts of boys—mealy boys and beef-faced boys!" said Mr. Grimwig when Mr. Brownlow was vaunting the excellence of young Oliver Twist. But then it must be recollected that Mr. Grimwig was an old bachelor, and hated children. Two sorts of boys! I know twenty—two hundred sorts! First of all there is your "regular boy," who goes to a public school and is now at home for the holidays. He is about twelve years old, stout and firmly-built, ruddy-faced and curly-haired; he wears trousers of what is known as "Oxford mixture," a species of stuff apparently specially manufactured for the use of boys, as it is never shown to you by your tailor when you attain to manhood. These trousers are short in the legs and white at the knees; they are smeared in the region of the pockets with reminiscences of by-gone toffee; they bulge out with

concealed peg-tops, tennis-balls, and half-munched apples, and on the hips the pocket-flaps make two large "dog's-ears." The waistcoat was originally black, but is now of a grayish hue, from the immense quantity of powdered slate-pencil that has been spilt over it, and a stick of this valuable commodity is always protruding from the pocket, either through the legitimate opening, or through a hole made by its own sharp point. Across the waistcoat, too, runs a straight white line, the result of perpetual rubbings against the desk while undergoing the necessary initiation into the mystery of pot-hooks and hangers. The contents of the waistcoat-pockets are most probably half a peg-top, known in scholastic language as "bacon," the aforementioned slate-pencil, a favourite "alley," and a couple of "taws," a penny, half a stick of parti-coloured nastiness known as "Boney's ribs," and popularly supposed to be a portion of the anatomy of the late prisoner of St. Helena, and a small piece of wood sharpened at both ends and called a "cat." The first idea suggested by the jacket is that of universal shininess—the collar, the cuffs, the front-flaps by the but-

tons, are greased and polished to a pitch of intensity; under the left arm is a large excrescence caused by the handkerchief of the owner, a small brass cannon, a long piece of whipcord with a button at the end, and a Jew's-harp; all which are stuffed into the jacket, together with the boy's greatest treasure, a fat buck-handled knife, which, besides the large and small blades, contains a corkscrew, a saw, and an instrument for picking obtrusive stones out of horses' feet,—all most useful articles to a young gentleman pursuing his education at a classical school. The socks of the regular boy, at least as much as can be seen of them between the trouser and the boot, are generally dirty; the boot is of the Blucher pattern, laceless, but with the flaps cleverly connected by means of a portion of the peg-top's whipcord. I am sorry to say that your regular boy is not good at hands—these members being generally black and grimy, with dubby, bitten nails, and tasteful decorations of cuts and warts; neither are his ears or neck worthy of close observation. His language is peculiarly his own—he never has heard it until he goes to school, he never hears it (but from his own children perhaps)

after he is grown up. Do you recollect, reader, any of that wonderful tongue, and the impressions and ideas connected with it? Do you recollect the different sorts of marbles called "alleys, taws, and clayeys;" the mysteries of that pastime with the wonderful name "High-cock-a-lorum, jig, jig, jig;" the stinging cuts of the tennis-ball inflicted at "egg-hat;" the extraordinary game of "duck," which hadn't the slightest connexion with any feathered fowl, but was played with large flint-stones; the peculiarities of "tit, tat, to;" the desperate struggles to obtain a straight line of "oughts and crosses?" Do you recollect what you used to eat in those days? Toffee, hardbake, all-sorts, small rum- and gin-bottles, sugar pipes and cigars, sugar mutton-chops and various other joints elegantly painted and gilt, Bath buns by the dozen, acidulated drops by the ounce, cocoa-nuts, medlars, unripe fruit of all kinds, and a delicious preparation of frizzled quill-pen which was known as "roast beef"! As these recollections rise up before me, I no longer wonder at the fortunes achieved by Professor Holloway, Dr. De Jongh, and the venerable Jacob Townsend. Bad, however, as they may be, they do no

harm to the regular boy, who has the digestion of an ostrich and the constitution of a horse, and whose severest ailments are cured by a little salts and senna. The regular boy loves all out-door sports, doats on the pantomime, and looks forward to the day when he shall attain maturity in order that he may be a clown. He loves his father and mother, and specially his sisters; his brothers he both likes and licks; grand'pa is "a jolly old brick," and grand'ma an "old trump;" but he doesn't get on well with his maiden aunts, and their portraits, adorned with impossible noses, wild heads of hair, and fierce moustaches, are to be found on the backs of slates and on the palings of the neighbourhood generally. Of his schoolmaster he always retains a disagreeable impression, and the schoolmaster does his best to keep it up, never believing that any of his pupils are any thing but boys, even though they have great strapping children of their own standing by their side. His mechanical genius is seldom very great—his powers of destructiveness being generally in the ascendant, and with the afore-named knife he inscribes his name in letters varying from an inch to a foot on all practicable places. He is

not a great reader—the Arabian Nights, Robinson Crusoe, and Peter Parley, constituting his library. His weakness is smoking. From the first time that he has enjoyed a penny Pickwick, and a dreadful bilious attack simultaneously, he considers himself a man, and he runs the risk of imposition, cane, and birch, to spend half-an-hour on a windy afternoon behind a dreary old haystack, inhaling a nasty preparation of treacle and cabbage-leaves. Finally, the regular boy is universally knowing, but ever thirsting for information of a peculiar kind, generous, brave, predatory, averse to classic learning, idle, strong, and healthy. In these last particulars, and indeed in all others, he differs essentially from the boy who is brought up at home, or at a private tutor's, and who, in fact, is never a "boy," but always a "young gentleman." He is always ailing; in the winter he wears clogs and a comforter—sometimes, indeed, a boa, to the intense delight of the ruder youths, who assault him in the streets, and call after him by the opprobrious epithet of "Miss." He is a puny, wizen-faced, melancholy youth, but intensely gentlemanly withal. He wears gloves and Wellington boots, and mittens in winter,

and takes lozenges, not as other boys do, as sweetmeats and condiments, but to do good to his chest. He never plays at any rough games; he never soils his fingers or his linen; he never shouts, or screams, or fights. He gets cuffed, and kicked, and chaffed by all public school-boys, and retaliates not. He is good at draughts, understands the mysteries of backgammon, and when you are dining with his family delights them by the clever way in which he puzzles you by astute arithmetical questions culled from the *Key to Walkinghame's Tutor's Assistant*. He is the boy who, in younger days, repeats "My name is Norval," standing on a chair; and who, when he arrives at man's estate, is pronounced to be an "agreeable rattle," and so clever in acting charades and private theatricals. He is partial to *Evenings at Home*, but abjures *Robinson Crusoe* as "a book that could not possibly be founded on fact." He is the admiration of his sisters, who think him so gentlemanly and amusing, who superintend the curling of his hair, and who work him fragile braces and useless slippers. He is generally the son of a rich man, and accordingly is made much of by his private tutor,

who excuses his late arrival at the scholastic parlour, who asks tenderly after his father's health, and kotoos to him as only struggling tutors can. In after life he is to society what Martin Tupper and Coventry Patmore are to literature—he is a chip in the porridge of the world, harmless, inoffensive, self-satisfied, and utterly useless.

The Street Boy—the Ishmael of modern times, his hand being against every man, and every man's hand being against, and whenever there is an opportunity upon, him. He is a bully and a tyrant, and the terror of London generally; the terror of old ladies, whom he hates with an instinctive hatred, to whose pursuit he calls forth tribes of his own class, to whom he discloses the advent of the apocryphal "mad bull," whose legs he pinches, uttering at the same time the simulated yelpings of the maddened dog. He is hated by foreign gentlemen of fantastic appearance, ridiculing them in the public streets, calling attention to the length of their beards, or the curious cut of their hats and garments, and addressing them with the mystic words "Shallabala" and "Mossoo," which he believes to be the staple idiom of their language. He is hated by om-

nibus conductors, whose attention he calls by loud cries of "Hi!" and to whom, on their looking round, he addresses the friendly "sight;" by gaping, mooning old gentlemen, to whom he points out imaginary balloons; by watchmakers and corkcutters, who practise their occupation in the windows of their shops, and who are driven mad by the rapid pantomime with which he imitates their movements, and by his repeated endeavours to startle them so that their fingers may suffer from their inattention. He is hated by poulterers, before whose shops he appears unceasingly, handling hares and rabbits, and crying "Mie-aw" and "Poor puss;" by policemen for his unremitting inquiries after the health of their inspectors, and his ardent pursuit of knowledge in the matter of the theft of the rabbit-pie; by the lame and the blind, and by all mendicants: but he is respected by the proprietors of Punch, by ballad-singers, and by the itinerant vendors of articles, to all of whom he is an early and a constant audience; and without his lending himself to be operated upon, how could the man who removes the stains from our clothes hope to prosper?

Music may be said to have charms to soothe the savage street-boy, or rather to render him tolerably quiet for the space of a few minutes, and he will listen with complaisance even to the most cholera-producing organ. The Ethiopians are his great delight; he likes their shirts and collars, and the patterns of their trousers, and he more especially delights in the leader of the band, with the tow wig and the leaden spectacles. He himself is generally musical, and accompanies his songs with obligatos on two bits of slate, or a Jew's harp, or, worse than all, an old Lowther Arcade accordion. Where he picks up the tunes that he sings is a wonder—he knows them and whistles them long before they are upon the organs; and it is from his *repertoire* that the burlesque writer selects those airs which he knows will be most popular and most appreciated parodies. His Terpsichorean exercises are generally confined to the wondrous “double-shuffle,” and to scraps of wild and weird-like dances performed round the objects of his attack. He is generally engaged in some profession—perhaps in the green-grocery line, when he encases his head in the empty basket as he returns from his errands,

wearing the handle as a chin-strap, and decking his person with an old sack; or he may be a butcher, in which case he furtively adorns his hair with suet, and wears long and pointed curls, known among the female servants in his neighbourhood as "Bill's aggerawaters." Or he may be a printer, black-faced and paper-capped, sitting at dead of night in the outer chamber of the grinding newspaper-writer, and never thoroughly awake. He may be a fishmonger, with a garment of flannel which is contrived to pay a double debt, serving him at once for apron and pocket-handkerchief; or a poulterer, or a grocer; but whatever his occupation, he holds firm to one grand purpose, and never allows his pleasure to be at all interfered with by his business. Walking leisurely along with his oilskin-covered basket, filled with medicines, on the immediate receipt of which depends perhaps life and death, he will stop and enjoy the humours of Punch, or run half a mile in the opposite direction after a fire-engine, or be beguiled by a cry of "Stop thief!" Of course, on his return home, he will tell a lie to screen himself, and be summarily kicked and cuffed: indeed, looking at the wonder-

ful life led by the street-boy—his exposure to cold, hunger, and misery; his want of education and lack of kind treatment—we must not wonder at his growing into the lounging, ill-conditioned, ignorant, hardened cub, which, in nine out of ten cases, he becomes.

CHAPTER VIII.

IN AND ON AN OMNIBUS.

I SUPPOSE—the lamentable failure of his tercentenary notwithstanding—it will be considered creditable to have shared a few thoughts with the late Shakespeare. On more than one occasion I have detected myself uttering sentiments which were identical with some enunciated by that bard, differing merely in the language in which they were expressed, as might be expected when it is considered that the late Shakespeare was a poetical party; while I pride myself on being an eminently practical man. Besides, if I may so say, my illustrations have been brought down to the present time, and are impregnated with the terse wit and playful symbolical humour of the day; whereas our friend S.'s are, to say the truth, somewhat rococo and old-fashioned. You will see what I mean when I quote one of my last, a saying which was hailed with immense delight at our club, The Odd Tricks,

on Saturday: "All the world's an omnibus!" I am aware that S. has the same idea with regard to "a stage," but stages do not run now, whatever they might in S.'s time, and besides an omnibus gives greater variety.

I have been an omnibus rider all my life. To be sure, I went to school in a hackney-coach, falling on my knees in the straw at the bottom, I remember, as the wretched horses stumbled up Highgate Hill, and imploring a maiden aunt, who was my conductor, to take me back, even at the sacrifice of two bright half-crowns, which I had received as a parting tip, and a new pair of Wellington boots. But when I "left," I came away in an omnibus, and at once began my omnibus experiences. I lived then with my mother, at Beaver Cottage, Hammersmith New Road, and I used to go up every morning to the Rivet and Trivet Office, Somerset House, in the nine-o'clock omnibus, every seat of which was regularly bespoke, while the conductor summoned his passengers by wild blasts upon a horn, as the vehicle approached their doors. That was two-and-twenty years ago. Every rider in the nine-o'clock omnibus, save the junior clerk in the Rivet and Trivet department,

has taken his final ride in a vehicle of much the same shape, but of a more sombre colour, and carrying only one inside; and I, that identical junior, some years retired from the service on a little pension and a little something of my own, trying to kill time as best I may, find no pursuit more amusing than riding about in the different omnibuses, and speculating on the people I meet therein.

I am bound to say that in many respects the omnibuses and their men are greatly improved during my experience. The thirteenth seat, that awful position with your back to the horses and your face to the door, where, in a Mahomet's-coffin-like attitude, you rested on nothing, and had to contemplate your own legs calmly floating before you, very little below the faces of your right and left hand neighbours, has been abolished; a piece of cocoa-nut matting is generally substituted for that dank straw which smelt so horribly and clung to your boots with such vicious perseverance; most of the windows are, what is termed in stage-language, practicable, and can be moved at pleasure; and a system of ventilation in the roof is now the rule, instead of, as in my early days, the singular exception.

Thirdly, by the salutary rule of the General Omnibus Company, aided by the sharp notice which the magistrates take of any impropriety, the omnibus servants, the coachmen and conductors, from insolent blackguards have become, for the most part, civil and intelligent men; while the whole "service"—horses, harness, food, &c.—has been placed on a greatly improved footing. But my experience teaches me that the omnibus-riders are very much of the same type as ever. I still find the pleasant placid little elderly gentleman who sits on the right hand by the door, who always has an umbrella with a carved ivory top, and always wears a plaited shirt-frill, dull-gray trousers, rather short and showing a bit of the leg of his Wellington boots; who carries a brown snuff-box like a bit of mottled soap; who hands every body into the omnibus, and who is particular in pushing down and sending quickly after their wearers the exuberant crinolines of the ladies. It is he who always starts subscriptions among the regulars for the Lancashire distress, or the frozen-out operatives, or for the widow of some stable-helper who was killed by a kicking horse, or for the crippled crossing-sweeper who was knocked down

by the hansom cab. It was he who, when Stunning Joe, our "express" nine A.M. coachman, was pitched off his box going sharp round the corner of Pineapple-place, and upset us all—we were not hurt, but Joe smashed his collar-bone and his right arm, and was not expected to live—it was our pleasant-faced little friend who used to go every day to the hospital, made interest, and got himself admitted, and took Joe a thousand little comforts, and sat by his bedside and read to him by the hour together—not forgetting, when Joe grew convalescent, to put three sovereigns into his hand, and tell him to go and set himself thoroughly right by a fortnight's stay at the sea-side. The omnibus calls for him regularly, but long before it arrives he has walked down to the end of the crescent where he lives, with two or three of his grandchildren, who all insist on being kissed before they allow him to start, while their mother, his daughter, seldom omits to wave her farewell from the dining-room window. He takes six weeks' holiday in the autumn, when it is understood that he is away at the sea-side with his family; but at no other time does he omit riding to and from town in the omnibus, save on Christmas-eve,

when, in consideration of certain trifling purchases he has made—among them a huge Leadenhall-Market turkey, a large slice out of Fortnum and Mason's shop, and half the Lowther Arcade store of toys—he charts a cab, and freights it for the return journey with the precious produce.

I still find the old gentleman who sits on the left side of the door, and whose hands are always clasped on the top of his stick; the old gentleman with a face like a withered apple, with the high stiff-starched cross-barred check neckerchief, the close-napped curly-brimmed hat, the beaver gloves, the pepper-and-salt trousers, the drab gaiters and boots. He never helps any body in or out, and scowls if he be accidentally touched; when the women's crinolines scrape his legs as their wearers pass him, he growls "Yar!" and prods at them with his stick; he knows the sensitive part of the conductor's anatomy, and pokes him viciously therein when people want the omnibus to be stopped; he raps the fingers of the little boys who spring on the step proffering newspapers; he checks the time of the journey by a large white-faced gold watch, which he compares with every church-clock on the road; he tells

women to get their money ready; he shakes his stick in a very terrifying and Gog-and-Magogish manner at crying children. He never will have the window open on the hottest summer day; and he refuses to alight, if there be any mud, unless he is deposited close by the kerbstone, no matter if the City crush is at its height, and the omnibus has to be steered through an opposing procession of Pickfords. He is the great delight of the knifeboard "regulars," who never omit to send a puff of tobacco-smoke (which he detests) into his face as they mount to their elevated berths; who call him "The Dry Fish;" who declare that, instead of washing, he rasps himself, as a baker does rolls; who vow, when the omnibus goes over any rough bit of road, that they hear his heart rattling inside him like a pebble; who send him by the conductor the most tremendous messages, which that functionary enormously enjoys, but never delivers.

The Feebles, who are the constant supporters of omnibuses, still remain in all their forcible feebleness. They are of both sexes, the female perhaps predominating. They never know whether the omnibus is outward or home-

ward bound, and, having got in at Charing Cross, begin, when we arrive at Turnham Green, to express their wonder "when we shall come to the Bank." They never can recollect the name of the street at which they are to be set down. "Deary me, Newland Street—no, not Newland, some name just like Newland—Archer Street, I think, or terrace; don't you know it? Mrs. Blethers lives at Number Seven!" If by chance they do know the name of their destination, they mention it to the conductor when they get in, and then for the whole remainder of the seven-mile journey, whenever the vehicle stops, they bounce up from their seats, mutter "Is *this* Belinda Grove?" stagger over the feet of their fellow-passengers until they reach the door, where they are wildly repulsed, and fall back until they are jolted by the motion of the omnibus into a seat. The women carry their money either in damp smeary colourless kid gloves, round the palms of which they roke with their forefinger for a sixpence, as a snuff-connoisseur will round his box for the last few grains of Prince's Mixture; or they carry it in a mysterious appendage called a pocket: not a portion of the dress, but, so far as I can make out

from cursory observation, a kind of linen wallet suspended from the waist, to reach which causes a great deal of muscular exertion, and not a small display of under-garment. It is scarcely necessary to say that the Feebles never know the fare, that they always want change for a sovereign—fourpence to be deducted—that they constantly think the omnibus is going to be upset, or that the horses have run away; that they always interrupt testy old gentlemen deep in their newspapers by asking them whether there is any news; and that they are in omnibuses, as they are in life, far more obstructive and disagreeable than the most wrong-headed and bumptious.

When a child in an omnibus is good, you hate it; what can you do when it is bad? When it is good, it kneels on the seat with its face to the window, and with its muddy boots, now on the lap of its next, now against the knees of its opposite, neighbour. It drums upon the glass with its fist, it rubs the glass with its nose. When it is bad, if it be very young, from under its ribboned cap, fiercely cocked on one side, it glares at you with a baleful eye, and dribbles as in mockery, with one mottled arm up to the elbow in its mouth.

If it be "getting on" and older, it commences to swing its legs like two clock pendulums, with a regular motion, increasing in vigour until one of its feet catches you on the shin, when it is "fetched-up" short by a sharp prod in the side from its attendant sprite, and is put as a punishment to "stand down." Then it deposits itself on your toes, and thence commences the ascent of your leg, taking your in-step as its Grands Mulets, or resting-place.

Among the general characteristics of "insides," I need scarcely point out a feeling inducing those already in possession to regard every new-comer with loathing, to decline tendering the least assistance, to close up their ranks as earnestly as the Scottish spearmen did at Flodden Field, "each stepping where his comrade stood," and to leave the new arrival to grope his way through a thick brushwood of knees, crinolines, and umbrellas, to the end of the omnibus, where he finally inserts as much of himself as he can between the wood-work and his next neighbour's shoulder, and leaves his ultimate position to Time the Avenger. It is also an infallible and rigorously observed rule that, if two people meeting in an omnibus know each other and speak, all the

other people in the omnibus endeavour to listen to what those two are saying—also, that all the other people pretend that they are not listening or paying the least attention to the conversation. Further, it is necessary that whenever a stout person is seen blocking out the daylight in the doorway, each side having the same complement of passengers, all should begin to assume a defiant air, and get close together and play that game known among children as “no child of mine,” or to treat the new-comer as a kind of shuttlecock, tossing him from one to the other until an accidental jolt decides his fate.

The “outsides” are a very different class. Women are never seen there, save when an occasional maid-servant going into the country for a holiday, climbs up beside the coachman: who, though he greatly enjoys her company, becomes the object of so much ribald chaff among his associates. Passing him on the road, they inquire “when it’s a comin’ off?” if he be unmarried; or if he be in a state of connubial bliss, threaten to “tell the missis.” But the “outsides” are, for the most part, young men of fast tendencies, who always make a point of ascending and descending while

the omnibus is at its swiftest, and who would be degraded and disgusted if the driver slackened his pace to accommodate them. Some of them are very young-looking indeed, and but one remove from schoolboys; and these, I notice, feel bound to suck wooden or meerschaum pipes, and to talk of their exploits of the previous evening. With them, the conductor, always known by his christian name, is on the pleasantest terms, occasionally being admitted to the friendly game of pool, at the tavern where the journey terminates. They know all the other omnibus servants on the road, who touch their hats as they pass, and they maintain a constant conversation about them in a low growling tone: As—"Old Harry's late again this morning!" "Little Bill's still driving that blind 'un, I see!" and so forth.

Most of these young fellows have their regular booked seats, for which they pay weekly, whether they occupy them or no; and for a stranger to get up amongst them is as bad as if he were accidentally to penetrate into the sacred precincts of the Stock Exchange.

CHAPTER IX.

THE DIRTY DERBY.

WHEN I think that this is written with unshackled hands in a pleasant library instead of a padded cell, that I am as much in possession of my senses as I ever was, and that I acted under no constraint or obligation—I feel that the world will be naturally incredulous when I record the fact that I went to the last Derby. I blush as I make the statement; but if I had not gone, what could I have done with O'Hone, who had come over from Ballyblether expressly for the event, who had been my very pleasant guest for the three previous days, and who would have been grievously disappointed had he not put in an appearance on the Downs? For O'Hone is decidedly horsey. From the crown of his bell-shaped hat to the sole of his natty boots, taking in his cutaway coat, his long waistcoat, and his tight trousers, there is about him that singular flavour, compounded of stables, start-

ing-bells, posts and rails, trodden grass, metallic memorandum-books, and lobster-salad, which always clings to those gentry whom the press organs are pleased to describe as "patrons of the turf." Since O'Hone has been with me, the stout cob whose services I retain for sanitary purposes, and who is wont to jolt me up the breezy heights of Hampstead or through the green lanes of Willesden, has been devoted to my friend, has undergone an entirely new phase of existence, has learnt to curvet and dance, and has passed a considerable portion of each day in airing himself and his rider in the fashionable Row. For I find it characteristic of all my visitors from the country, that while they are in town not merely should they see, but also that they should be seen; there is generally some friend from their country town staying in London at the same time, to whom they like to exhibit themselves to the best advantage, and there is always the local member of parliament, who is called upon and catechised, and whose life, from what I can make out, must be a weary one indeed.

For O'Hone to miss seeing the race would have been wretched, though even then he

would not have been worse off than an American gentleman who crossed the Atlantic expressly to attend the Epsom festival, and who, being seized with the pangs of hunger at about half-past two on the Derby day, entered Mr. Careless's booth and began amusing himself with some edible "fixings" in the way of lunch, in which pleasant task he was still engaged when shouts rent the air, and the American gentleman rushing hatless out of the booth, and finding that the race had been run and was over, burst into the piercing lamentation: "Oh, Jé—rusalem! To come three thousand miles to eat cold lamb and salad!" But for O'Hone to miss being seen at the race, being recognised by the member, by Tom Durfy now sporting reporter on the press, but erst educated at the Ballyblether Free School, and by the two or three townsmen who were safe to be on the Downs—that would be misery indeed. Moreover, I was dimly conscious of a white hat, and a singular alpaca garment (which gave one the idea that the wearer's tailor had sent home the lining instead of the coat), which I knew had been specially reserved by my friend for the Derby day. So I determined

that, so far as I was concerned, no overt objection to our going to Epsom should be made.

I still, however, retained a latent hope that the sense of impending misery, only too obvious from the aspect of the sky during the two previous days, would have had its natural effect in toning down my impulsive guest; but when I went into his bedroom on the morning of the fatal day, and when I pulled up the blind and made him conscious of the rain pattering against his window, he merely remarked that "a light animal was no good to-day, anyhow," and I, with a dim internal consciousness that I, albeit a heavy animal, was equally of no good under the circumstances, withdrew in confusion. At breakfast, O'Hone was still appallingly cheerful, referred in a hilarious manner to the "laying of the dust," borrowed my waterproof coat with a gentlemanly assumption which I have only seen rivalled by the light comedian in a rattling farce, and beguiled me into starting, during a temporary cessation of the downfall, after he had made a severe scrutiny of the sky, and had delivered himself of various meteorological observations, in which, when they come from persons residing

in the country, I have a wild habit of implicitly believing.

We had promised, the night before, to call for little Iklass, an artist, and one of the pleasantest companions possible when all went well, but who, if it rained, or the cork had come out of the salad-dressing, or the salt had been forgotten at a pic-nic, emerged as Apollyon incarnate. Little Iklass's greatest characteristic being his generous devotion to himself, I knew that the aspect of the morning would prevent him from running the chance of allowing any damp to descend on that sacred form. We found him smoking a pipe, working at his easel, and chuckling at the discomfiture outside. "No, no, boys," said he, "not I!—I'll be hanged——"

"Which you weren't this year at the Academy!" I interrupted viciously. But you *can't* upset Iklass with your finest sarcasm!

"The same to you, and several of them—no—which I was not—but I *will* be if I go to-day! It'll be awfully miserable, and there are three of us, and I daresay you won't always let me sit in the middle, with you to keep the wind off on either side. And I won't go!" And he wouldn't; so we left him,

and saw him grinning out of his window, and pointing with his mahl-stick at the skies, whence the rain began to descend again as we got into the cab.

We went on gloomily enough to the Waterloo Station; we passed the Regent Circus, and saw some very shy omnibuses with paper placards of "Epsom" on them, empty and ghastly; there was no noise, no excitement, no attempt at joyousness! I remembered the Derbys of bygone years, and looked dolefully at O'Hone; but he had just bought a "c'rt card," and was deep in statistical calculations.

There was no excitement at the station; we took our places at the tail of a damp little crowd, and took our tickets as though we were going to Birmingham. There *was* a little excitement on getting into the train of newly-varnished carriages destined for our conveyance, for the damp little crowd had been waiting some time, and made a feeble little charge as the train came up. O'Hone and I seized the handle of a passing door, wrenched it open, and jumped in. We were followed by an old gentleman with a long stock and a short temper, an affable stock-broker in a perspiration, and two tremendous

swells, in one of whom I recognised the Earl of Wallsend, the noble colliery proprietor. Our carriage is thus legitimately full; but a ponderous woman of masculine appearance and prehensile wrists, hoists herself on to the step, and tumbles in amongst us. This rouses one of the swells, who remonstrates gently, and urges that there is no room; but the ponderous woman is firm, and not only takes 'vantage-ground' herself, but invites a male friend, called John, to join her. "Coom in, Jan! Coom in, tell ye! Coom in, Jan!" But here the swell is adamant. "No," says he, rigidly, "I'll be deed if John shall come in! Police!" And when the guard arrives, first John is removed, and then the lady; and then the swell says, with an air of relief, "Good Heaven! did they think the carriage was a den of wild beasts?"

So, through a quiet stealing rain, the train proceeded, and landed us at last at a little damp rickety station—an oasis of boards in a desert of mud. Sliding down a greasy clay hill, we emerged upon the town of Epsom and the confluence of passengers by rail and by road. We, who had come by the rail, were not lively; we were dull and dreary,

but up to this point tolerably dry, in which we had the advantage of those who had travelled by the road, and who were not merely sulky and morose, but wet to their skins. At the Spread Eagle and at the King's Head stood the splashed drags with the steaming horses, while their limp occupants tumbled dismally off the roofs, and sought temporary consolation in hot brandy-and-water. A dog-cart, with two horses driven tandem-fashion, and conveying four little gents, attempted to create an excitement on its entry into the town. One of the little gents on the back seat took a post-horn from its long wicker case and tried to blow it, but the rain, which had gradually been collecting in the instrument, ran into his mouth and choked him; while the leading horse, tempted by the sight of some steaming hay in a trough, turned sharp round and looked its driver piteously in the face, refusing to be comforted, or, what was more to the purpose, to move on, until it had obtained refreshment. So, on through the dull little town, where buxom women looked with astonishment mixed with pity at the passers-by; and where, at a boot-shop, the cynical proprietor stood in the doorway

smoking a long clay pipe, and openly condemned us with a fiendish laugh as "a pack of adjective jackasses;" up the hill, on which the churned yellow mud lay in a foot-deep bath, like egg-flip, and beplastered us wretched pedestrians whenever it was stirred by horses' hoofs or carriage-wheels; skirting the edge of a wheat-field (and a very large edge we made of it before we had finished), the proprietor whereof had erected a few feeble twigs by way of barriers here and there—a delusion and a mockery which the crowd had resented by tearing them up and strewing them in the path; across a perfect Slough of Despond situated between two brick walls, too wide to jump, too terrible to laugh at, a thing to be deliberately waded through with turned-up trousers, and heart and boots that sank simultaneously; a shaking bog, on the side of which stood fiendish boys armed with wisps of straw, with which, for a consideration, they politely proposed to clean your boots.

I didn't want my boots cleaned. I was long past any such attempt at decency. O'Hone was equally reckless; and so, splashed to our eyes, we made our way to the course. Just as we reached the Grand Stand a rather shabby

carriage dashed up to the door, and a howl of damp welcome announced that Youthful Royalty had arrived. Youthful Royalty, presently emerging in a Macintosh coat, with a cigar in its mouth, proved so attractive that any progress in its immediate vicinity was impossible; so O'Hone and I remained tightly jammed up in a crowd, the component parts of which were lower, worse, and wickeder than I have ever seen. Prize-fighters—not the aristocracy of the ring; not those gentry who are “to be heard of,” or whose money is ready; not those who are always expressing in print their irrepressible desire to do battle with Konky's Novice at catch-weight, or who have an “Unknown” perpetually walking about in greatcoat, previous to smashing the champion,—not these, but elderly flabby men with flattened noses and flaccid skins and the seediest of greatcoats buttoned over the dirtiest of Jerseys; racing touts,—thin, wiry, sharp-faced little men,—with eyes strained and bleary from constant secret watching of racers' gallops; dirty, battered tramps, sellers of cigar-lights and c'rect cards; pickpockets, shifty and distrustful, with no hope of a harvest from their surroundings; and “Welsh-

ers," who are the parody on Tattersall's and the Ring, who are to the Jockey Club and the Enclosure what monkeys are to men—poor pitiful varlets in greasy caps and tattered coats, whose whole wardrobe would be sneered at in Holywell Street or Rag Fair, and who yet are perpetually bellowing, in hoarse ragged tones, "I'll bet against the field!" "I'll bet against Li-bellous!" "I'll bet against the Merry Maid!" "I'll bet against any one, bar one!" Nobody seemed to take their bets, nobody took the slightest notice of their offers, and yet they bellowed away until the race was run, in every variety of accent—in Cockney slang, in Yorkshire harshness, in Irish brogue. These were the only members of the crowd thoroughly intent on their business; for all the rest Youthful Royalty had an immense attraction.

Sliding and slithering about on the sloping ground where turf had been and where now mud was, they pushed, and hustled, and jumped up to look over each other's heads. "*Vich* is 'im? *Vich* is 'im?" "*Not* 'im! That's the late Duke o' Vellington! There's the Prince a blowin' his bacca like a man!" "Ain't he dry neither?" "Ain't *I*? Vonder

vether he'd stand a drain?" "He wouldn't look so chuff if he vos down here, vith this moisture a tricklin' on his 'ed!" "Who's the hold bloke in barnacles?" "That—that's Queen Hann!" No wet, no poverty, no misery, could stop the crowd's chaff; and amidst it all still rang out the monotonous cry of the "Welshers"—"I'll bet against Li-bellous!" "I'll bet against the field!"

A dull thudding on the turf, a roar from the neighbouring stand, and the simultaneous disappearance of all the "Welshers," tells us—for we can see nothing—that the first race is over, and that we can move towards the hill. Motion is slow; for the crowd surging on to the course is met by a crowd seething off it, and when I do fight to the front, I have to dip under a low rail, and come out on the other side, like a diver. The course was comparatively dry; and just as we emerged upon it, a large black overhanging cloud lifted like a veil, and left a bright, unnatural, but not unpromising, sky. O'Hone brightened simultaneously, and declared that all our troubles were over; we gained the hill, worked our way through the lines of carriages, received a dozen invitations to lunch, took a glass or two

of sherry as a preliminary instalment, and settled down for the Derby. The old preparations annually recurring — the bell to clear the course, the lagging people, the demonstrative police, the dog (four different specimens this year at different intervals, each with more steadfastness of purpose to run the entire length of the course than I have ever seen previously exhibited), the man who, wanting to cross, trots half way, is seized and brought back in degradation; the man who says or does something obnoxious (nobody ever knows what) to his immediate neighbours just before the race, and is thereupon bonneted, and kicked, and cuffed into outer darkness; the yelling Ring; the company on the hill, purely amateurish, with no pecuniary interest beyond shares in a five-shilling sweepstakes, and divided between excitement about the race and a desire for lunch; the entrance of the horses from the paddock, the preliminary canter—all the old things, with one new feature—new to me at least—THE RAIN! No mistake about it; down, down it came in straight steady pour; no blinking it, no “merely a shower,” no hint at “laying the dust;” it asserted its power at once, it defied

you to laugh at it, it defied you to fight against it, it meant hopeless misery, and it carried out its meaning. Up with the hoods of open carriages, out with the rugs, up with the aprons, unfurl umbrellas on the top of the drags; shiver and crouch Monsieur Le Sport, arrived *viâ* Folkestone last night—poor Monsieur Le Sport, in the thin paletot and the curly-brimmed hat, down which the wet trickles, and the little jean boots with the shiny tips and the brown-paper soles, already pappy and sodden. Cower under your canvas wall, against which no sticks at three a penny will rattle to-day, O gipsy tramp; run to the nearest drinking-booth, O band of niggers, piebald with the wet! For one mortal hour do we stand on the soaked turf in the pouring rain, with that horrid occasional shiver which always accompanies wet feet, waiting for a start to be effected. Every ten minutes rises a subdued murmur of hope, followed by a growl of disappointment. At last they are really “off,” and for two minutes we forget our misery. But it comes upon us with redoubled force when the race is over, and there is nothing more to look forward to.

Lunch? Nonsense! Something to keep

off starvation, if you like—a bit of bread and a chicken's wing—but no attempt at sociality. One can't be humorous inside a close carriage with the windows up, and the rain battering on the roof! Last year it was iced champagne, claret-cup, and silk overcoats; now it ought to be hot brandy-and-water, foot-baths, and flannels. Home! home, across the wheat-field, now simple squash; down the hill, now liquid filth; through the town, now steaming like a laundress's in full work; home by the train with other silent, sodden, miserable wretches; home in a cab, past waiting crowds of jeering cynics, who point the finger and take the sight, and remark, "Ain't they got it, neither!" and "Water-rats this lot!"—home to hot slippers, dry clothes, a roaring fire, and creature-comforts, and a stern determination never again to "do" a dirty Derby.

CHAPTER X.

INNOCENTS' DAY.

ON the evening of Wednesday the 3d of June a contest was waged between the two guardian angels respectively typifying Pleasure and Duty, who are appointed to watch over the humble person of the present writer. These contests are by no means of unfrequent occurrence; but as this was a specially sharp tussle, and as it ended by Duty getting the best of it—which is very seldom the case—I feel bound to record it. This humble person was, on the occasion in question, seated in his small suburban garden, on a rustic seat (than which he ventures to opine in regard to the hardness of the surface to be sat upon, its slipperiness, its normal dampness, and the tendency of its knobbly formation towards irritation of the spinal cord, there cannot be a more distressing piece of furniture), was smoking an after-dinner pipe, and was contemplating the glowing relics of the splendid

day fast being swallowed up in the gray of the evening, when he felt a slight (mental) tap on his left shoulder, and became aware of the invisible presence of Pleasure.

“Lovely evening!” said Pleasure.

“Gorgeous!” said present writer, who had had his dinner, and was proportionally enthusiastic.

“Splendid for Ascot to-morrow!”

“Mag-nificent!”

“You’ll go, of course?”

Mental tap on my right shoulder, and still small voice: “You’ll do nothing of the sort!” Ha! ha! I thought, ‘Duty has come to the charge, then.

“Well!” I hesitated, “you see, I—”

“What!” exclaimed Pleasure, “are you in any doubt? Think of the drive down the cool calm Windsor Park with the big umbrageous trees, the blessed stillness, the sweet fresh air! Then the course, so free and breezy, the odour of the trodden turf, the excitement of the race, the—”

“Think of how to pay your tailor,” whispered Duty; “the triumph of a receipted bill, the comfort of knowing that you’re wearing your own coat and not Schnipp and

Company's property ! Stick to your great work on Logarithms ; be a man, and earn your money."

" You'll kill the man !" said Pleasure, beginning to get angry. " You know what all work and no play makes Jack."

" His name isn't Jack, and if it were, what then?" retorted Duty. " Do you know what all play and no work makes a man, or rather what it leaves him? A. purposeless idiot, a shambling loafing idler, gaping through his day, and wasting other people's precious time. Ah ! if some of your followers, ' votaries of pleasure,' as they're called, both male and female, had some permanent occupation for only a few hours of the day, the sin, and crime, and misery that now degrade the world might be reduced by at least one-half!"

" Don't talk of *my* followers, if you please, old lady!" shouted Pleasure, highly indignant. " No need to say that none are ' allowed' in your case, I should think. With your horribly stern ideas you do far more mischief than I. Ever holding you before their eyes, men slave and slave until such wretched life as is left them terminates at middle age ; seen through your glasses, life is a huge sandy

desert, watered by the tears of the wretched pilgrims, but yielding no blade of hope, no flower of freshness. I hate such cant!"

"Madam!" said Duty, with grave courtesy, "your language is low. I leave you."

"And I leave you, you old frump!" And both guardian angels floated away: Pleasure, as she passed, bending over me, and murmuring in my ear, "You'll go to Ascot!"

But when I came in-doors and examined the contents of my cash-box, I found that the waters were very low indeed; when I looked on my desk and saw about fifteen written slips of paper (my great work on Logarithms) on the right-hand side, and about five hundred perfectly blank and virgin slips on the left; when I thought of the bills that were "coming on," and of the bills that had recently passed by without having been "met," I determined to stick steadily to my work, and to give up all idea of the races. In this state of mind I remained all night, and—shutting my eyes to the exquisite beauty of the day—all the early morning, and in which state of mind I still continued, when, immediately after breakfast, I was burst in upon by Oppenhart—of course waving a ticket.

It is a characteristic of Oppenhardt's always to be waving tickets! A good fellow with nothing particular to do (he is in a Government office), he has hit upon an excellent method of filling up his leisure by becoming a member of every imaginable brotherhood, guild, society, or chapter, for the promotion of charity and the consumption of good dinners. What proud position he holds in the grand masonic body I am unable positively to state. On being asked, he replies that he is a—something alphabetical, I'm afraid to state what, but a very confusing combination of letters,—then he is an Odd Fellow, and an Old Friend, and a Loving Brother, and a Rosicrucian, and a Zoroaster, and a Druid, and a Harmonious Owl, and an Ancient Buffalo. I made this latter discovery myself, for having been invited by a convivial friend to dine at the annual banquet of his "herd," I found there Oppenhardt, radiant in apron and jewel and badge, worshipped by all around. He has drawers full of aprons, ribbons, stars, and "insignia;" he is always going to initiate a novice, or to pass a degree, or to instal an arch, or to be steward at a festival; and he is always waving tickets of admission to cha-

ritable dinners, where you do not enjoy yourself at all, and have to subscribe a guinea as soon as the cloth is drawn. So that when I saw the card in his hand I made up my mind emphatically to decline, and commenced shaking my head before he could utter a word.

“Oppenhart, once for all, I WON’T! The Druids sit far too late, and there’s always a difference of opinion among the Harmonious Owls. I’ve got no money to spare, and I won’t go.”

“Well, but you’ve been boring me for this ticket for the last three years!” says Oppenhart. “Don’t you know what to-day is? it’s Innocents’ Day.”

I thought the Innocents were some new brotherhood to which he had attached himself, and I rebelled again; but he explained that he meant thus metaphorically to convey that that day was the anniversary meeting of the charity children in St. Paul’s, a gathering at which I had often expressed a wish to be present, and for which he had procured me a ticket. “Got it from Brother Pugh, J.G.W., Bumblepuppy Lodge of Yorkshire, No. 1, who is on the committee; don’t tell Barker I gave it you, or I should never know peace again.”

Captain Barker is Oppenhardt's shadow, dresses at him, follows him into his charities, his dinners, and his clubs, and though but a faint reflex of the great original, yet, owing to the possession of a swaggering manner and a bow-wow voice, so patronises his Mentor that the latter's life is a burden to him.

I promised not to tell Barker, I took the ticket, I decided to go, and I went. Even Duty could not have urged much against such a visit, the mode of transit to which was the sixpenny omnibus! My card was admissible between ten and twelve, but it was scarcely eleven when I reached St. Paul's, and I thought I would amuse myself by watching the arriving company. Carriages were pouring into the churchyard thick and fast, a few hired flies, but principally private vehicles, sedate in colour, heavy in build, filled with smug gentlemen, smuggler ladies and demure daughters, driven by sedate coachmen, and conveying serious footmen behind, drawn by horses which had a Claphamite air utterly different from the prancing tits of the Parks—sober easy-going animals, laying well to collar, and doing the work cut out for them in all seriousness and gravity. Preceded by beadles,

gorgeous creatures in knobbly gowns and cockades like black fans in their hats (who, however, were so utterly unable to make any impression on the crowd that they had themselves to enlist the services of, and to be taken in tow by, the police), flanked by the clergymen of the parish, generally painfully modest at the gaze of the multitude, the troops of charity children came pouring in from every side; and, round each door was gathered an admiring crowd, principally composed of women, watching the entrance of the schools. The excitement among these good people was very great. "Here's our school, mother!" cried a big bouncing girl of eighteen, evidently "in service." "Look at Jane, ain't she nice? Lor, she's forgot her gloves!" and then she telegraphed at a tremendous rate to somebody who didn't see her, and was loud in her wailing. Two old women were very politely confidential to each other. "Yes, mem, this is St. Saviour's School, mem, and a good school it is, mem!" "Oh, I know it well, mem! which it was my parish until I moved last Janiwarry, and shall always think of partin' with regret, mem!" "Ho! indeed, mem! Now, to be sure! Wos you here last

year, mem? No, you was not! Ah, it was a wet day, a dreadful disappointment, mem! though our children made the best on it, the boys wore their capes, and the gals was sent in cabs, they was!" Nearly every where the sight of the children made a pleasant impression. I saw two regular Old-Bailey birds, with the twisted curl and the tight cap and the grease-stained fustians stop to look at them, and one of them, pointing with his pipe, said in quite a soft voice to the other, "Reg'lar pretty, ain't it?" The boys at St. Paul's School left off their play and rushed at the grating which separates them from the passers-by and howled with delight; the omnibus men pulled up short to let the children cross, and, possibly out of respect for such youthful ears, refrained from favouring their horses with any of their favourite appellations; only one person sneered—a very little person in human form, who climbed with difficulty into a high hansom. He was evidently Ascot bound, and, as he drove off, lighted a very big cigar, which stuck out of his mouth like a bowsprit. This majestic little person curled his little lip at the mildness of our amusement.

I went round, as my ticket directed me, to the north door of the cathedral, and found the entrance gaily covered in with canvas, surrounded by a crowd of gazers, and guarded by such large-whiskered and well-fed policemen as only the City can produce. Up some steps, and into the grasp of the stewards, duly decorated with blue watch-ribbons and gold medals like gilt crown-pieces. Stewards of all sorts—the bland steward, “This way, if you please. Your ticket? thank you. To the left; thank you!” with a bow and a smile as though you had done him a personal favour in coming; the irritable steward, short, stout, and wiping his stubbly head with one hand, motioning to the advancing people with the other—“Go *back*, sir, go *back*, sir! Can’t you hear? Jenkins, turn these—Jenkins! where the dev——” (cut short by nudge from bland steward, who whispers). . “Ah, I forgot! I mean where can Jenkins have got to; *back*, sir! the other side of that railing, do you *hear* me? *back*, sir!”—the sniggering steward, to whose charge the ladies are usually confided; the active steward, who springs over benches and arranges chairs; the passive nothing-doing steward, who looks on,

and takes all the credit (not an uncommon proceeding in the world at large); and the misanthropic steward, who has been "let in" for his stewardship, who loathes his wand and leaves it in a dark corner, who hates his medal and tries to button his coat over it, who stares grimly at every thing, and who has only one hope left—"to get out of the place." Types of all these generic classes were in St. Paul's, as they are in all charitable gatherings. Most excited of all were four holding plates, two on either side the door, and as each knot of people climbed the steps, the stewards rattled the plates until the shillings and half-sovereigns sprung up and leaped about as they do under the movement-compelling horsehair of the conjuror.

Proceeding, I found myself under the grand dome of St. Paul's, in the middle of an arena with a huge semicircular wooden amphitheatre of seats, tier above tier, on either side of me, the pulpit facing me, and at my back the vast depth of the cathedral reaching to the west entrance completely thronged with people. The amphitheatre, reserved entirely for the children, presented a very curious appearance. A painted black board, or in some

instances a gay banner inscribed with the name of the school, was stuck up on high as a guide. Thus I read: Ludgate Ward, Langbourn Ward, Rains' Charity; and the children were seated in rows one under the other, ranging from the top of the wooden erection to the bottom. A thin rope, or rail, divided one school from the other. Several of the schools had already taken their places, the boys at the back, and the girls in the front, in their modest little kerchiefs, their snowy bibs and tuckers, their (in many instances) remarkably picturesque caps, and their dresses in heavy hues of various sober colours. Between two schools thus settled down would come a blank space yet unoccupied, and thus the amphitheatre looked like the window of some linendraper's shop, as I have seen it when "set out" by some unskilful hand, with rivulets of pretty ribbons meandering from one common source, but with bits of the framework on which they rested showing between.

Half-past eleven, and the seats specially reserved for holders of tickets are becoming full: elderly spinsters with poke bonnets and black mittens, pretty girls with full crinolines and large brass crosses on their red-edged

prayer-books, a good many serious young men, whose appearance gives me a general notion of the committee of a literary institution, and a few languid and expensive men, who seem utterly lost, and gaze vacantly about them through rimless eye-glasses; the clergy in great force—short stout old gentlemen with no necks to speak of, only crumpled rolls of white linen between their chins and their chests; tall thin old gentlemen with throats like cranes, done up in stiff white stocks with palpable brass buckles showing over their coat-collars; bland mellifluous young gentlemen in clear-starched dog-collars and M.B. waistcoats; and a few sensible clergymen wearing their beards and not losing one whit of reverend or benign appearance thereby. I take my seat next a pompous old gentleman in shiny black, who wears a very singular pair of gloves made of a thin gray shiny silk with speckles cunningly inwoven, which make his hand look like a salmon's back, a stout old gentleman who pushes me more than I like, and then scowls at me, and then says to his daughter: "Too hot! too close! we'd better have stopped at Shooter's 'Ill," in which sentiment I mentally concur. Now, the last

vacant spaces between the schools are filled up, and the children are so tightly packed that one would think every square inch must have been measured beforehand and duly allotted. Each semicircle is like a sloping bed of pretty flowers. White is the prevailing colour, interspersed with lines of dark blue, light blue, slate, gray, and here and there a vivid bit of scarlet; such coquettish little caps, puffed, and frilled, and puckered as though by the hands of the most expensive French clear-starchers; such healthy happy little faces, with so much thoroughly English beauty of bright eye, and ruddy lip, and clear glowing complexion. Ah! the expenditure of yellow soap that must take place on the morning of Innocents' Day! All looked thoroughly clean and well, and, like the gentleman at his theological examination when asked to state which were the major and which were the minor prophets, I "wish to make no invidious distinctions." Yet I cannot refrain from placing on record that the girls of two of the schools had special adornments, the damsels of St. Botolph's, Aldgate, wearing a rose in their waistbands, while each of the little maidens of

Aldgate Ward bore a nosegay of fresh wild flowers.

Twelve o'clock, the children all rise up, and all heads are turned towards the south door. I look round in that direction and behold a fat elderly man, in a black gown and a curled wig, like a barrister, painfully toiling under the weight of an enormous gilt mace, which he carries across his arms after the fashion of pantomime-warriors generally. My pompous neighbour stirs up his daughter with his elbow, and whispers, with great reverence, "The Lord Mayor, my dear!" This great magnate is, however, unable to be present, but sends as his representative an alderman. There are the sheriffs appropriately dressed, this broiling June day, in scarlet gowns trimmed with fur, wearing enormous chains, and looking altogether cool and comfortable. They are ushered into their seats with much ceremony, the elderly barrister puts the mace across the top of a pew, and seats himself immediately under the pulpit, in an exhausted condition. Two clergymen appear behind a raised table covered with red cloth; and, at a given signal, the children proceed to their prefatory prayer, all the girls covering their

faces simultaneously with their little white aprons; this has a most singular effect, and, for the space of a minute, the whole amphitheatre looks as though populated with those "veiled vestals" with whose appearance the cunning sculptor-hand of Signor Monti made us familiar.

When the children rise again, there rises simultaneously in a tall red box, like a Punch's show with the top off, an energetic figure in a surplice, armed with a long stick; the organ begins to play, and, led by the man in the surplice, the children commence the Hundredth Psalm, which is sung in alternate verses, the children on the right taking the first verse, and the second being taken up by those on the left. I had heard much of this performance, and, like all those things of which we hear much, I was a little disappointed. I had heard of people being very much affected; of their bursting into tears, and showing other signs of being overcome. I saw nothing of this. The voices of the children were fresh, pure, and ringing; but where I stood at least, very close to the choir, there was a shrillness in the tone, which at times was discordant and almost painful. There was also a marked pecu-

liarity in the strong sibillation given to the letter "s" in any words in which it occurred.

Several times during the ensuing service the children sang much in the same manner, and I began to think that all I had heard was overrated, when after a sermon during which many of them had refreshed themselves with more than forty winks and considerably more than forty thousand nods, they burst into the glorious Hallelujah chorus. The result was astonishing. I cannot describe it. At each repetition of the word "Hallelujah" by the four thousand fresh voices, you felt your eyes sparkle and your cheeks glow. There was a sense of mental and physical exhilaration which I not only felt myself, but marked in all around me. Now for the first time I understood how the effect of which I had been told had been produced; now I comprehended how the "intelligent foreigner" (who is always brought forward as a reference) had said that such a performance could not be matched in the world.

As I left the building the money-boxes were rattling again, and I, and many others, paid in our mites in gratitude for what we had seen and heard. I hope the children en-

joyed themselves afterwards; I hope they had not merely an intellectual treat. The end crowns the work, they say. In this case the work had been admirably performed, and I hope that the end which crowned it consisted of tea and buns.

CHAPTER XI.

SAWDUST AND LAMPS.

FOR the last twenty years of my life—and I am now only forty-five—I have been an old man, a heavy old man; burnt-cork furrows have ploughed up my cheeks; bald scalp wigs have worn away my once curly hair; crow's-feet of the blackest Indian-ink have encircled my eyes. In the prime of my life I lost my individuality, and became "Old Foggles"—old Foggles I have remained. It is not of myself, however, that I am about to speak; my human, like my theatrical career, has been one of simple "general utility." He whose story I am going to relate was born to brighter and better things, and kicked down the ladder with his own foot when within reach of the topmost round.

Twenty years ago I was engaged with Barker, who then managed the Flamborough Circuit, and, after playing at a few minor

towns, we opened at Wealborough, the queen of the watering-places in that part of England, and Barker's surest card. An idle, pleasure-seeking, do-nothing kind of place was, and is, Wealborough. There are rows of grand stuccoed houses facing the sea, libraries, promenades, bands, old ruins, the very pitches for pic-nics, within an easy distance, horses for the swells to ride, officers for the ladies to flirt with, baths for the valetudinarians to endeavour to regain their used-up health in, and the prettiest provincial theatre in the world for evening resort. Theatricals then were at no low ebb; for there was the race week, and the assize week, the Mayor's bespeak, and the officers' bespeak; and when things flagged Barker would send round to the different boarding-houses and hotels, and get the visitors to order what pieces they liked, pitting their tastes one against the other, as it were; so that business was brisk, actors were happy, and there were no unpaid salaries—for, as they say in the profession, "the ghost walked" every Saturday morning. At the time I am speaking of, however, and for the first season for many years, matters were not so bright as we could have wished. The combination of

circumstances was against us. An evangelical clergyman, a tall man, with long black hair and wild eyes, was attracting everybody's attention, and was weekly in the habit of inveighing against theatrical entertainments, and denouncing all those who attended them; while Duffer, the low comedian, who had been engaged at a large expense, in consequence of the enormous hit he had made in the manufacturing districts, proved too strong for the refined taste of the Wealborough visitors, and by his full-flavoured speeches, eked out by appropriate gesture, frightened half the box audience from the theatre. We were playing to houses but a third full, and were getting utterly miserable and dispirited, when one day old Barker, whose face had for some time resembled a fiddle, his chin reaching to his knees, called us together on the stage, after rehearsal, and joyfully announced that he thought he had at last found a means for restoring our fallen fortunes. He told us that a young man, utterly unknown, had offered himself as the representative of those characters which among the public are known as the *jeunes premiers*, but which we call "first juvenile tragedy;" that he had tried him pri-

vately, engaged him at once, and that, if he did not make a tremendous hit next Monday, the occasion of the officers' bespeak, in Hamlet, he Barker did not know what was what in theatrical matters. The next day came, and the neophyte, who was introduced under the name of Dacre, attended rehearsal; he was tall, handsome, and evidently a perfect gentleman; he went through the part quietly and sensibly enough, but made no new points and gave no exaggerated readings; so that Duffer, the low comedian, by nature a morose and miserable man, and made more surly by his recent failure at Wealborough, shrugged his shoulders, and prophesied the speedy closing of the theatre. I myself held a different opinion; I thought the young man spoke with ease and judgment; that he was reserving himself for his audience; and moreover that, in the presence of none but the other actors, who were grimly polite, and evidently predisposed against him, he felt nervous and constrained. I felt all this, but I said nothing, being naturally a reserved and cautious man. When the night came, the house was crowded to the ceiling. Barker, who well knew how to work the oracle in such cases, had been

about the town talking incessantly of the new actor, of his handsome person, his gentlemanly manners, the mystery of his position, coming no one knew whither, being no one knew what; and, in fact, had so excited public curiosity that all the leading people of the place were at the theatre. The private boxes were filled with the officers, handsome, vapid, and inane, thankful for the chance of any excitement, however small, to relieve the perpetual *ennui*; in the centre of the house sat Podder, the genius of Wealborough, who had written seventeen five-act tragedies, one of which had been acted in London and damned, and who was intimately connected with the stage, his uncle having been godfather to Mr. Diddear; the dress-circle was filled with the *belles* of the boarding-houses and their attendant cavaliers; the pit was thronged with jolly young tradesmen and their wives, soldiers in uniform, and a sprinkling of the maritime population of the place; while in the gallery, wedged as it was from end to end with shirt-sleeved and perspiring youths, not a nut was heard to crack from the rise of the curtain until the end of the play, except once, at the first appearance of the Ghost of Hamlet senior, when the che-

mist's boy, a lad of weak intellect, whose bedroom looked upon the churchyard, shrieked aloud, and was led forth by the lobe of his ear by the constable in attendance.

Talk of a success! Such cheering was never heard in Wealborough theatre before or since! After Dacre had been on the stage five minutes the applause began, and whenever he appeared it was renewed with tenfold vigour, until the curtain fell. The sympathy of the audience seemed to extend to those actors who were on the stage with him; but they would brook no delay which kept their favourite from them, and Duffer, who was playing the First Gravedigger, and who, as a last hope of retrieving his lost character, had put on seventeen waistcoats, and began to gag the "argal" speech tremendously, very nearly got soundly hissed. When the curtain fell, Dacre was vociferously called for, and his appearance before the curtain was a perfect ovation; the ladies waved their handkerchiefs—the officers nearly thumped the front of their boxes in—the pit and gallery shouted applause; while Podder, rising to his feet, spread his arms before him as if blessing the actor, and was heard to mutter, "the Swan!

the Swan!" alluding, it is presumed, to Shakespeare—not Dacre. Barker was in the highest spirits, seized the new actor by both hands (we thought he was going to embrace him), and then and there invited him and the entire company to an extempore supper to be provided at the adjacent tavern. Dacre, however, declined on the plea of excitement and over-fatigue, and at once retired to his lodgings. From that night his success was complete; he played the entire round of juvenile tragedy parts, and on each occasion to very large audiences; he was the talk of the country for miles round; all the provincial newspapers sang his praises, and soon the London theatrical journals began to speak of him, and to hope that a gentleman of such talent would soon visit the metropolis.

All this time he maintained towards Barker and all the members of his company the most studied politeness, the most chilling courtesy; except on business topics he never spoke—resolutely declined all attempts at intimacy, refused to partake of the proffered beer or spirits with which these jolly fellows refresh themselves of an evening; and upon one occasion, when the aforementioned Duffer was uttering specially

blasphemous language, rebuked him openly in the dressing-room, and, on receiving an insolent answer, administered to him such a shaking that Duffer nearly swallowed his false teeth. I do not think that I myself, though much quieter and steadier than the rest of the company, should ever have become intimate with Dacre but for the following circumstance. I was in the habit, when I had a new part to learn, of taking my manuscript in my pocket and going for a long walk upon the sands—not to the fashionable part, where the horses were perpetually galloping, the people promenading, and the children playing—but far away on the other side of the town, where I had it all to myself, and could declaim, and spout, and gesticulate as much as I pleased, without being taken for a lunatic. Several times, during my rambles, I had encountered Dacre walking with a lady of slight and elegant figure, closely veiled; but nothing beyond a mere bow of recognition had passed between us; one day, however, while declaiming to the winds the friendship I, as Colonel Damas, held for Claude Melnotte, in Bulwer's *Lady of Lyons*, then just produced, I thought I heard a cry for help, and looking round, perceived

at some short distance Dacre kneeling by the extended form of the veiled mysterious lady. I hastened to him, and found that the lady, who he stated was his wife, had been rambling among the rocks, gathering wild flowers, when her foot slipped, and she fell, striking her temple against a sharp flint, and inflicted a wound from which the blood was slowly falling. Her face, of a chiselled and classic beauty, was deadly pale, and she was senseless; but we bathed the wound with water, which I scooped up in my hat, and she soon recovered sufficiently for us to lead her gently to Dacre's lodgings. These were situated in one of the oldest parts of the old town, overlooking the sea, far from the bustle and confusion of the fashionable part; and after rendering all the service I could, I eventually took my leave. From that day I became a constant visitor to those rooms, and gradually won the confidence and friendship of their occupiers; many a night, after the theatre, I would accompany Dacre home, and after a light supper, prepared by his beautiful and affectionate wife, we would sit over the fire, while he, smoking an old German pipe, would talk of literature and poetry, or of what interested me even

more—of his earlier life. He was the son of a wealthy Liverpool merchant, had been educated at a celebrated provincial school, and removed from thence to a German University, whence he only returned to find his father dead, his affairs hopelessly involved, and utter ruin staring him in the face. Without the smallest notion of business, and having always had a passion for acting, he had taken to the stage as a profession, and had offered himself to Barker, of whom he heard good reports; bringing with him as his wife a young portionless girl, the daughter of a clergyman, to whom he had been attached since childhood, and who, at the period of their marriage, was gaining a subsistence as a governess in Liverpool. But the manners and habits of his fellow-actors disgusted him: they were a loose-thinking, underbred, vulgar lot, to whom he could not introduce his pure-thinking, simple-minded wife, and with whom he himself had no feeling in common; and he was but waiting an eligible opportunity to remove to the metropolis, where he thought, and justly, that his talents would soon secure him a position in that charming artistic society for which he pined, and for which he felt himself peculiarly

fitted. This opportunity soon came. I had one night been playing Sir Peter Teazle in the *School for Scandal*, and had been struck by the vehement applause and cries of "bravo" in a strident voice, which had proceeded from one of the private boxes, when Dacre as Charles Surface made his appearance on the scene; and on going into the green-room after the curtain fell, I found a stout, middle-aged, black-whiskered, vulgar-looking man, dressed in the extreme of the fashion, standing in the middle of the room, and holding both Dacre's hands in his. This gentleman, I learned, was the well-known Mr. Batten Flote, manager of the Theatre Royal, Hatton Garden, who had come from town expressly to witness Dacre's performance. As I entered the room he was pouring forth the most profuse laudation. "Capital," he said, "capital, my boy! There was the dash of Elliston, the grace of Kemble, and the rollicking humour of Wallack! That's the sort of thing to bring 'em down! Barker, my lad, you've been a fortunate fellow to get hold of such a trump card as this! Let's have a bottle of sham together! I'll stand it, and curse the expense!" I well enough knew what this meant,

and so did Barker; he fought up against it, and tried to look cheerful. When Dacre gave him notice that he was about to leave him (which he did the next Saturday), he gave vent to a burst of virtuous indignation, and bewailed the manner in which he had been treated; then he made a faint offer of an additional five pounds a week, and finally took consolation by engaging a troop of performing dogs and monkeys, which he had heard of from a metropolitan correspondent, and getting a new piece written to display their acquirements.

So Dacre left us; he took a farewell benefit, when the house was thronged; and he and I had a farewell chat, principally about his future. Mr. Flote had engaged him at an excellent salary, promised him the best parts in the best pieces, and pledged himself to forward his views in every way; and as the young man told me all this, his eye lighted, and he appeared a different being from what I had ever seen him. The London public, he said, should see that the race of gentlemanly actors was not extinct; that there were yet men who could understand the passions which they had to portray, and appreciate the lan-

guage set down for them to declaim : he would not content himself with the creations of the old dramatists, but he would be the reflex of modern characters, the men of the day should see themselves represented by one of themselves, one equally well born, equally well educated, equally well dressed, equally well behaved. His wife too, instead of passing her dreary evenings in a wretched lodging, should have companions worthy of her—companions to whose society his name would be a passport—society in which the most celebrated in literature and art were happy to mix. So he rattled on, and I, delighted at his prospects, but very sad at his departure, listened to him far into the night. Then we parted, with many promises of long letters to be interchanged, and of descriptions of all that had happened—on his side at least, for my life seemed planned out, one unvarying dismal repetition of old men's characters in a country theatre.

Dacre departed, and I was left alone, more alone even than I had been before I knew him, for he had inflicted me with his distaste for my professional brethren, and I mixed with them no more. So I walked upon the sands,

and studied and read, and in my despair I even made friends with Podder, went to his room, drank weak tea, and listened to three of his tragedies without going to sleep. At last, three weeks after Dacre left us, I received from him a long letter and a batch of newspapers; he had appeared as Claude Melnotte, and created a tremendous sensation. The press had unanimously pronounced in his favour, and their verdict was backed by the enthusiasm of the public. His letter was written in the highest spirits: from first to last he had been received with shouts of applause; a royal duke had come into the green-room when the play was over and begged to make his acquaintance; he was proposed at the Thespis, the great Dramatic and Literary Club; the wives of two or three well-known literary men had called upon Mrs. Dacre; Mr. Flote was most kind and liberal, and every thing was *couleur de rose*.

Six months passed away; we had visited the dull inland towns on our circuit during the dull winter season, and had been doing but a dull business; I had heard but seldom from Dacre, though the newspapers still continued to give the most flaming accounts of

his success, when one day, soon after our return to Wealborough, Barker came to me with a face radiant with joy, and announced that Dacre was coming to us for a month on a "starring" engagement. I was hurt at not having heard this intelligence from my friend himself, but I reflected on the charms of his position and his numerous engagements, and anxiously expected his arrival. He came, and I was astonished at the difference in his appearance; from a fresh-coloured handsome youth he had become a pale anxious man, still handsome, but oh! so worn, so haggard-looking. The change was not confined to his appearance: now, instead of the old lodgings with their cracked furniture and their desolate sea-view, he took handsome rooms on the Marine Parade, in the very centre of the fashionable part of the town; every afternoon he was to be seen among the loungers on the promenade; he dined constantly with the officers and entered into every kind of gaiety, I might almost say dissipation. To his fellow actors he had always been distant, now his manner was positively rude; he avoided my society, and seemed ill at ease whenever he encountered me in the street; worst of all, for whole

evenings together he neglected the society of his wife, and would pass his time after the theatre in mess-rooms, at billiard-tables, among the loose visitors to the town, and several times he was late in his arrival at the theatre, and when he did come he was evidently flushed with wine, most odd and incoherent in his speech. That I grieved deeply over this state of affairs I need scarcely say, and, after some deliberation, I took upon myself to speak to Dacre on the subject; but his reply was so rude, so angry and decisive, that I saw at once all intervention was hopeless. He finished his engagement at Wealborough and returned to London, and from that time forth the accounts I received from him were bad indeed. Among theatrical people there is a great freemasonry and brotherhood; we provincial professionals hear of all the triumphs of our London brethren; and if their successes travel quickly and are much talked about, what shall I say of their failures? Dacre's great success had made him many enemies; and the moment that there was any thing to say against him, a hundred tongues were but too ready to be the bearers of the news. Rumours reached us at Wealborough of his unsteadiness, of his want

of care for his reputation, of his passion for dissipation, for excitement, for *drink*; "stars" on their travels reiterated these rumours, adding to them choice little bits of their own fabrication, and at last the *Scarifier*, an infamous weekly newspaper then in being, but now happily extinct, had weekly paragraphs in which Dacre's name was coupled with that of the loveliest and most abandoned women that ever disgraced the theatrical profession.

About the time that these paragraphs appeared, I received an offer from the manager of the other great London theatre, the T. R. Gray's Inn Lane, an engagement as actor and stage-manager; and as, independently of the position and pecuniary emolument held out to me, I saw an opportunity of once more meeting Dacre, and perhaps of rescuing him from the abyss into which he had plunged, I gladly availed myself of it. Curiously enough, immediately after my arrival in London, the manager told me he wished to employ me on a rather delicate mission. Mr. Dacre, he said, had quarrelled with the Hatton-Garden proprietors, and he was most anxious to engage him for the Gray's-Inn-Lane Theatre. He, the manager, had heard of my

former intimacy with Dacre: would I now consent to be his ambassador? Delighted at the thought of once more seeing my friend, and thinking nothing of our recent quarrel, I consented. The next day I called on Dacre at an address in Brompton, which the manager had given me, and found him sitting in a room most elegantly furnished, opening into a little conservatory and garden. He was dressed in a handsome dressing-gown, Turkish trousers and slippers, and was lounging in a large arm-chair near an open piano; on a round table in the centre of the room was a confused litter of playbills, manuscript "parts," books, light-kid gloves, some of the smallest size, some loose silver, and fragments and ashes of cigars; on the wall hung a portrait of himself as Hamlet opposite to a print of Mrs. Lurley (the lady with whom his name had been associated in the *Scarifier*), in her favourite character of the Demon Page; on the sofa lay a handsome Indian shawl, and an elegant airy fabric of black lace, which looked like a bird-nest, but was a bonnet. I noticed all these things as I entered, and my heart sank within me as I marked them. Dacre himself had much changed; he had lost all his youthful sym-

metry, and had become a stout, bloated, unwholesome-looking man. He received me coolly enough, but when he heard my business he warmed into life; and after listening to the terms proposed, accepted with an eagerness which I thought suspicious. Taking courage at his altered manner, I asked after his wife. He became confused, hesitated, stammered, walked across to the cellaret, filled a liqueur-glass of brandy, which he drank, and then told me that she was not well, that she was out of town, that—in fact what the devil business was it of mine? I was about to reply, angrily enough this time, for his manner was most rude, and I knew I had right on my side, when a pert-looking lady's-maid entered the room and told Dacre that "the brougham was at the door, and missis was tired of waiting." He reddened as he heard this, muttered some half-inaudible excuse about "a matter of business," and bowed me out of the room. The next day, and for several days after, he attended rehearsal with great punctuality, and entered into the business of the piece with apparent attention; he was evidently striving to keep up his character, which had been a

little damaged by the version of his quarrel with the Hatton-Garden people, which Flote had circulated. To me his conduct was studiously polite: he consulted me as to setting of the scenes and the arrangements of the stage, but except on purely business questions he never addressed me.

The night of his first appearance at the Gray's-Inn-Lane Theatre arrived, a night which, to whatever age I may live, I shall never forget. Dacre's separation from Flote had caused a great excitement in the theatrical world, and all kinds of reasons were alleged for it; and on this night the house was crammed, many friends of Dacre and many supporters of Flote being among the audience. The play was a new five-act tragedy by a gentleman who has now made himself a name among the first dramatists of modern times; and all the London critical world was on tip-toe with expectation.

The curtain rose, and the beautiful setting of the scene received a volley of applause; two or three minor personages then entered and the audience settled themselves down, waiting in dead silence for Dacre's appearance. I saw him for a minute before he went

on to the stage, and noticed that he looked flushed and excited; but, busied as I was with matter of minor detail, I had not time to exchange a word with him. His cue was given and he rushed upon the stage; a thunder of applause greeted him, mixed with a few sibillations, which had only the effect of renewing and redoubling the approbation; he took off his hat in recognition of the reception, but in doing so he staggered, and had to clutch at a neighbouring table. Then he essayed to speak; but the words gurgled in his throat and he was inarticulate; a cold shiver ran through me as I stood at the wing, I saw at once the state of the case—*he was drunk!* The audience perceived it as readily as I did, a buzz ran round the house, a murmur, and then from boxes, pit, and gallery arose a storm of hissing and execration. Twice Dacre essayed to exert himself, twice he stepped forward and endeavoured to speak; but in vain. Stupefied with drink, dazzled by the glare of the lights, and maddened by the howling of the mob in front of him, he was fairly cowed, and after taking one frightened glance around, rushed madly from the stage and from the theatre.

After this fatal night I did not see Dacre again for many months; for though the management boldly contradicted the report of his drunkenness, and advertised boldly that the whole scene was the result of a scheme concocted by the enemies of the theatre, he never could be induced to return to the Gray's-Inn-Lane boards. Falling lower and lower in the social scale, he played for a week or two at a time at one after another of those dramatic "saloons," half-theatre, half-public-house, with which the east-end of London is thickly studded; then went for a flying visit into the provinces, where he found his fame and position gone, and returned to the metropolis and his east-end patrons. I myself had also had my reverses of fortune; the manager of the Gray's-Inn-Lane Theatre seemed to consider from my previous intimacy with Dacre, that I ought to bear some share in his failure, and made a point of snubbing me so outrageously that we soon parted company. I returned once more to Barker, who was glad enough to see me, though he did not forget to point the moral of that pleasant proverb relative to pride having a fall, in the presence of the whole company; and after being with him

some time, I at last, through the medium of an agent, made an engagement with the manager of an American *troupe*, who was about to make a theatrical tour through California.

At length, a few nights before I started for Liverpool to embark, and as I was sitting musing over past and future days, the servant of my lodgings brought me a small note, for an answer to which she said the messenger waited. It was written in a hurried tremulous female hand, and signed "Emily Dacre." The writer stated that her husband was dangerously ill, and implored me, for the love of heaven, for the sake of our old friendship, to follow the messenger and come and see him. I hesitated but the instant; then casting aside all thought of danger, I seized my hat, and, preceded by a ragged boy who had brought the note, hurried into the streets. Across broad thoroughfares, and far away into a labyrinth of miserable little streets and courts, I followed this will-o'-the-wisp—streets where pinching and unwholesome poverty reigned triumphant, and where the foul miasma was already rising on the damp evening air—streets where the shops were all small and all with unglazed windows and flaring gas-lights,

where every thing was very cheap and horribly nasty; where the nostrils were offended with rank exhalations from stale herrings and old clothes, and where vice and misery in their most loathsome aspects met the eye. At last he stopped before one of the meanest private houses in the meanest street we had yet come through (though the neighbourhood was Clerkenwell, where all the streets are mean enough), and pushing the door open with his hand, beckoned me to follow him. He preceded me to the second-floor, where he silently pointed to a door, and apparently delighted at having discharged his mission, instantly vanished down the stairs. I rapped, and, in obedience to a faint cry of "come in," entered.

I was prepared for much, but what I then saw nearly overcame me; there was a swelling in my throat, a trembling of my limbs, and for a minute I felt unable to step forward. On a wretched truckle-bed, covered by a few miserable rags, lay Dacre, worn and reduced almost to a skeleton. He was asleep in that fitful uneasy slumber, that mockery of rest, which is granted to the fevered. As I bent over him I saw that his face was ghastly pale, except just under the closed eyes, where were

spread two hectic patches. His thin arm lay outside the coverlet, and the attenuated fingers of his transparent hand twitched nervously with every respiration. His poor wife, so changed from the lovely girl I had known at Wealborough, so pallid and woebegone, looking, in fact, so starved, sat on a broken rush-bottomed chair by the bedside; near her stood a rickety table with a few medicine-bottles, and the dried-up half of a lemon; an old felt-hat with a broken feather, an old cotton-velvet cloak with scraps of torn and tawdry lace hanging from it, and a pair of stage-shoes with red heels, were huddled together in a corner of the room. The poor woman told me, the tears streaming down her cheeks the while, that the dreadful propensity for drink had grown upon him hour by hour and day by day; that it had lost him every engagement, no manager caring to run the risk of his non-appearance at the theatre; and that for the past few days since he had been attacked with fever and delirium, they had been nearly destitute—the proceeds of the sale of his clothes being all they had to depend upon for support. The people of the house, she said, had been very kind to her, and had

sent for the parish doctor, who came two or three times and sent medicine, but gave very little hope of his patient's recovery; indeed that morning he had so evaded her questions, and shaken his head so solemnly, that she was terrified at his manner, and had ventured to solicit my presence and assistance.

A low moan from the sufferer here arrested her speech, and she ran quickly to the bedside. I turned and saw Dacre sitting up in the bed and resting on his elbow. So completely had drink and illness done their work that I should scarcely have recognised him: his long black hair fell in a tangled heap over his forehead; his thin hollow cheeks, ordinarily, after professional custom, so closely shaved, were now covered with thick black bristles; while his eyes, before so calm and stedfast, now glared wildly round him. I advanced and took his poor wasted hand, so hot and dry, between mine, said a few words of consolation, and trusted he felt better after his sleep. He gazed at me without any sign of recognition. "Ah, sleep!" he murmured, "nature's soft nurse! steep my senses in forgetfulness! Oh, my God, I wish she could, I wish she could!" He burst into a fit of

sobbing, and hid his head between his hands. His poor wife advanced, and touched him gently on the shoulder. "Here is your old friend, Charles," she said; "your old friend from Wealborough, you know!" At the last words he raised his head. "Wealborough!" he cried. "What do you know of Wealborough? Yes, yes, we'll go back there; Barker, Foggles, I know them all—the long walks, the sea-shore, the blue, the fresh, the ever free! The mess-room too, and the claret, and—hush! the overture's on. Not yet, not yet—now." And he raised himself in the bed—"Bravo! bravo! no gagging, the real words—stick to your author, sir—stick to your author! What a reception—again—again—Will they never let me speak for applause?"

During his ravings he bowed his head repeatedly; then, suddenly seizing me by the shoulder, he crept behind me, muttering in my ear, "Do you hear that hiss—paid to do it, sir—paid by—no! there! there it is—that serpent there at the back of the house—see him slowly unwinding his coils! It is from him that awful sound comes! See, he's creeping closer—he's about to spring upon me, and

crush me in his folds. Help! help! Some drink; give me some drink, Titinius, like a sick girl, like a sick girl!" During this paroxysm he had clutched my shoulder tightly, and almost screamed aloud; but as he spoke the last words his grasp relaxed, he fell softly back upon the pillow, and slept quietly and peacefully. So we watched him during the night; but towards morning he began to mutter in his sleep. He was apparently living again his student days, for he murmured scraps of German and of Latin, not as it is taught in England, but with a foreign accent; his face wore a sweet smile, and he seemed happy. About daybreak he opened his eyes and clasped his hands, and moved his lips apparently in prayer. Then, turning towards us, began speaking in disjointed sentences that magnificent soliloquy which the wisest and sweetest of poets has put into the mouth of Hamlet, commencing, "To be, or not to be?" So he continued for some time, muttering occasionally scraps of the same speech. At length a peculiar light broke over his countenance, and he beckoned to his trembling wife, who hastened to him. Twining his feeble arms around her, he imprinted one

long kiss upon her forehead, then murmuring in an almost inaudible voice, "Nymph! in thine orisons be all my sins remembered," his grasp relaxed, and he fell back—dead!

So ended the career of one who, under different circumstances and beyond the influence of those temptations which are the curse of the theatrical profession, might have lived long and happily, and died with weeping children round his bed. Before I left London I saw him decently buried in one of the metropolitan cemeteries; and, further, induced the relatives of his poor widow to receive her to her former home.

CHAPTER XII.

LECTURED IN BASINGHALL STREET.

To the mercantile world the name of Basinghall Street is inseparably connected with the Bankruptcy Court, and the title of the present paper, cursorily glanced at, would argue but badly for the respectability of its author. Miserly uncles would shake their heads and glorify at the fulfilment of their predictions as to their nephew's ultimate end; good-natured friends, and never-failing dinner convives, supper droppers-in, pipe-smokers and grog-drinkers, would shrug their shoulders and call upon each other to testify how often they had said that such a style of living could not continue; the half-crown borrowers, charity seekers, sick-wife-and-children possessors, and all those purse-blisters who form a portion of every man's acquaintance, would crow and chuckle over his fallen body, and quickly make off to fatten on some other friend who yet could be made to bleed. But, though it has not come

to this; though, being a simple clerk, I have not yet taken brevet rank as a "trader" for the purpose of evading my creditors under the Bankruptcy Laws; though I have not sold a few lucifer-matches to a convenient friend for the purpose of appearing as a timber-merchant, nor made over to my aunt any of my undoubted (Wardour-Street) Correggios to figure as a picture-dealer; though I have not been "supported" by Mr. Linklater, or "opposed" by Mr. Sargood; though Quilter and Ball have not yet received instructions to prepare my accounts; though the official assignee has had nothing to do with me, and though the learned commissioner has not been compelled, as a matter of duty, to suspend my certificate for six months, which is then to be of the third class—yet have I been lectured in Basinghall Street, and pretty severely too.

This is how it came to pass. Schmook, who is the friend of my bosom, and an opulent German merchant in Austin Friars, called on me the other day, and, having discussed the late fight, the new opera, the robbery at the Union Bank, and other popular topics, told me he could send me to a great entertainment in the City. I replied, with my

usual modesty, that in such matters I had a tolerably large acquaintance. I mentioned my experience of Lord Mayors' banquets, and I enlarged, with playful humour as I thought, on the tepid collation thereat spread before you, on the ridiculous solemnity of the loving-cup, with its absurd speech, its nods and rim-wiping; on the preposterous stentorian toast-master, with his "Pray si-lence for the chee-aw!" on the buttered toasts and the drunken waiters, and the general imbecility of the whole affair. Diverging therefrom, I discoursed learnedly on the snug little dinners of City companies, from the gorgeous display of the Goldsmiths down to the humble but convivial spread of the Barbers. Schmook was touched, and it was some few minutes before he could explain that it was to a mental and not a corporeal feast that he wished to send me. At length he stammered out, "The Cresham legshure! Ver' zientifig! kost nichts! noting to bay!" and vanished, overcome.

Schmook not coming to see me again, I had forgotten the subject of our conversation, when I lighted upon an advertisement in a daily paper setting forth that the Gresham

lectures for this Easter term would be given—certain subjects on certain named days—in the theatre of the Gresham College in Basinghall Street, in Latin at twelve o'clock, and in English at one. Wishing to know something of the origin and intent of these lectures, I applied to my friend Veneer, the well-known archæologist and F.S.A., but he was so engaged on his forthcoming pamphlet on Cuneiform Inscriptions that he merely placed in my hands a copy of Maunder's *Biographical Treasury* open at the name of Sir Thomas Gresham, the page containing whose biography was surrounded with choice maxims. I proceeded with the biography, and learned that the good old "royal merchant" had by will founded seven lectureships for professors of the "seven liberal sciences," and that their lectures were to be given, gratis, to the people. And I determined to profit by Sir Thomas Gresham's bounty.

The social science which I chose to be lectured on was rhetoric, thinking I might gain a few hints for improving myself in neat after-dinner speeches and toast-proposings; and at a few minutes before noon on the first day, when this subject stood for discussion on the

syllabus, I presented myself at the Gresham College. A pleasant-faced beadle, gorgeous in blue broadcloth and gold, and with the beaver-iest hat I had ever seen—a cocked-hat bound with lace like the Captain's in *Black-eyed Susan*—was standing in the hall, and to him I addressed myself, asking where the lecture was given.

“In the theatre, up-stairs, sir. Come at one, and you'll hear it in English.”

“Isn't it given in Latin at twelve?”

“Lor' bless you, not unless there's three people present, and *there never is!* I give 'em five minutes, but they never come! Pity, ain't it? He's here, all ready” (jerking his head towards an inner door), “he's got it with him; but there's never anybody to hear him, leastways werry seldom, and then if there is three or four come in for shelter out of the rain or such-like, d'rectly he begins in Latin, and they can't understand him, they gets up and goes away!”

“Then they do come to the English lectures?”

“Bless you, yes; to some of them, lots, 'specially the music and the 'stronomy. Ladies come—lots of 'em—and the clerks out of the

counting-houses hereabouts, for the music lecture's in the evening, you know; and they brings ladies with 'em—ah, maybe as many as a hundred!"

"Well, I'll go up and take my chance of somebody coming."

"You're welcome, sir, but I'm afraid you'll be the only one."

I went up-stairs, and soon found myself in one of the prettiest lecture-theatres I had ever seen, semicircular in shape, and fitted with benches, rising one above the other, and capable of holding some five hundred people. The space allotted to the lecturer was partitioned off by a stout panelling, and was fitted with a red-covered table and a high-standing desk. There was also an enormous slate with traces of recent diagrams still unobliterated, and an indescribable something, like a gymnastic machine, behind it. I took a seat on one of the topmost benches, and remained there a solemn five minutes, in the midst of a silence and desolation quite appalling. At last I heard a footstep on the stone stairs, and I hoped, but it was the beadle's. "I told you so," he said, pleasantly. "I always gives 'em five minutes; now, if you want to hear the lecture, come again at one!"

I went again at one, and found what a Frenchman would call "*du monde.*" There must have been fully seventeen people present. Close down against the rail partitioning off the lecturer's stage, was a crushed and spiritless man, with a fluffy head of hair, like a Chinchilla boa or an Angora cat, who seemed in the lowest possible spirits: leaning his head against the oaken panelling in front of him, he kept groaning audibly. Immediately behind him sat two seedy old women, in damp, mildewed, lustreless black, with smashed bonnets, and long, black, perspiry old gloves, the fingers of which, far too long, doubled over as far as the knuckles. They looked more like superannuated pew-openers than old ladies, and kept conversing in a hoarse whisper, at every sentence addressing each other as "*mem.*" A little higher up, a fair-haired, light-whiskered man had ensconced himself against one of the pillars, and was cutting his nails. He was properly balanced on the other side of the hall by a black-bearded man, leaning against the opposite pillar, who scratched his head. Close by me, at the upper portion of the hall, were a very pretty girl and a savage fidgety old woman, probably her aunt

Next to the aunt, a spry man with blue spectacles, who commenced taking notes as soon as the lecturer opened his mouth—a man with a red nose and a moist eye, and a general notion of rum-and-water about him—probably in the appalling-accident, devouring-element, and prodigious-gooseberry line of literature; a misanthropic shoemaker, having on the bench beside him a blue bag bursting with boots, which diffused an acrid smell of leather and blacking; and a miserable old man in a faded camlet cloak, who sat munching an Abernethy biscuit between his toothless gums, and snowing himself all over with the fragments,—made up our company. After the lecture had proceeded about five minutes, the door opened, and a thin, sharp-faced man, in very short trousers, very dirty white socks and low pumps, advanced two paces into the room, but he looked round deliberately, and after saying quietly “Dear me! ah!” as though he had made a mistake, turned round and retreated.

At a few minutes after one, a very tall gentleman in a Master-of-Arts gown appeared at the lecture-table, and made a little bow. We got up a feeble round of applause to re-

ceive him—such applause as three umbrellas and two pair of hands could produce—but he bobbed in acknowledgment of it, looked up at the gallery, which was perfectly empty, and commenced. He had such a low opinion of us his audience, that he thought we could not read the syllabus, for, instead of Rhetoric, his lecture, he told us, was upon Taste. I am, I trust, a patient hearer. I have lectured myself, and have a feeling for the position of a man being compelled to stand up and endeavour to win the attention of a stupid and scanty audience. I think there are very few men in London who have been better bored than I have in the course of my life; but I am bound to say that any thing more appallingly dreary and uninteresting than the tall gentleman's discourse I never listened to. The matter was prosaic, *réchauffé*, utterly void of originality, and thoroughly wearying; the manner was that fatal sing-song generally indulged in by the English clergy, interspersed with constant desk-smitings, and with perpetual eye-reference to the gallery, where there was no one to respond. The effect upon the audience was tremendous: the Chinchilla-headed man, more crushed than

ever, made a perfect St. Denis of himself, and had nothing mortal above the collar of his coat; the light-whiskered man cut his nails to the quick in an agony of nervousness, and his black-bearded opposite scalped himself in despair; the pretty girl went to sleep, and was roused at intervals by parasol-thrusts from her savage aunt; the "liner" shut up his note-book and amused himself by reading some of his previous productions on flimsy paper; the shoemaker glared indignantly, first at the lecturer, and then at any one whom he could seduce into an eye-duel; and the old Abernethy-eater betook himself to repairing a rent in his camlet cloak with a needle and thread. As for myself, I bore it patiently as long as I could, then I yawned and fidgeted, and at length taking advantage of my proximity to the door, I rose up quietly and slipped out, the last words echoing on my ear being, "This theory is that of Brown, and for further particulars I refer you to his work on Intellectual Philosophy;" a work which, it struck me, was doubtless to be found on the book-shelves of all the audience.

As I walked home, I pondered on the fitness of these things, and wondered whether,

in the strange course of events, the law would ever be able to comply less with the letter, and more with the spirit, of the intentions of a good and great man; and if so, whether instead of an unintelligible Latin lecture, and a preposterous English one, it would ever provide really good intellectual and moral culture gratis for London citizens, as was undoubtedly intended by the brave old Sir Thomas Gresham.

CHAPTER XIII.

HAUNTED HOXTON.

AT last my guilty wishes are fulfilled! At last I am enabled to look back into the past, and think that one great object of my life has been realised, for I have seen a GHOST! Shade of (ah! by the way, I forget the name of the shade, and I've left the document which could inform me in my over-coat pocket!—never mind!)—sacred shade, who appeared simultaneously to me and to some hundreds of entranced people, thou hast, so far as I am concerned, set the vexed question of apparitions at rest for ever. My interest in the ghost subject has been intense. I have read every story bearing upon it, and worked myself up to a delightful pitch of agonised excitement. Alone, and in the dead of night, do I peruse the precious volumes; the mere fact of the scene being laid in “an old castle in the Black Forest,” gives me a pleasing sensation

of terror; when the student seated alone in the tapestried rooms finds "the lights begin to burn with a blue and spectral hue," I shake; when there "reverberates through the long passages a dismal clanking of chains," I shiver; finally, when "the door bursts open with a tremendous crash," and there enters "a tall figure clothed in white, with one clot of gore immediately below its heart," I am in a state of transcendent bliss, and only long to have been in the student's place. Some years ago I thought I had a chance of realising my hopes. I read a book called, I think, *The Night-gown of Nature*, the author of which announced that he—or she—was thoroughly well acquainted with several houses where spectres appeared nightly with unexampled punctuality—houses "within a convenient distance from London, and accessible by rail," as house-agents say; and I wrote to him—or her—for the address of one of these houses, stating that I intended to pass a night there. He—or she—replied that though his—or her—statement was thoroughly correct, he—or she—must decline giving the address of any particular house, as such a course would be detrimental to the value of the property, and

might render him—or her—liable to an action at law on the part of the landlord. So I was disappointed.

I heard, however, the other day, that a real ghost, real as to its unreality, its impalpability, its visionary nothingness, was to be seen in a remote and unknown region called Hoxton. I had previously heard that the same, or a similar spectre, haunted Regent Street ; but I laughed at the notion. Regent Street! with the French boot-shop, and the ice-making man, and the Indian-pickle depôt opposite! A ghost in juxtaposition to electrical machines, a diver who raps his helmet with halfpence, and the awful insects in the drop of water! But Hoxton—there was something ghostly in the very name, and the place itself was as unfamiliar to me as *Tierra del Fuego*. Nobody to whom I spoke knew any thing about it; they “had heard the name;” it was “somewhere out north,” they thought. Ah! in an instant my fancy sketches the spot. A quaint old suburb, where the railway has not yet penetrated, where sleepy cows chew the cud of peace in quiet meadows, where ploughmen whistle o’er the lea (whatever that may happen to mean), where huge elms yet

stand waving their giant limbs before square red-brick mansions. One of these mansions for years untenanted, roofless, dismantled, a murder was committed in it years ago: an old man with silver hair, a spendthrift nephew, a box of gold, a carving knife, a well in garden where weapon is discovered years afterwards, a wailing cry at twelve P.M., a tottering figure wringing its hands—yes, that must be it, or something very like it! I determined to go to Hoxton that night.

There was no railway—so far I was right—and I went to my destination in a cab. After a little time I found we were striking out of the great thoroughfares of commerce into narrow by-lanes, where a more pastoral style of living prevailed; where fried fish of a leathery appearance lay in tangled heaps on the slabs of windowless fish-shops; where jocund butchers, seemingly on the best terms with their customers, kept up a perpetual chorus of “Buy, buy!” and slapped the meat before them with a carving-knife and a gusto that together seemed to give quite an appetite to the hesitating purchaser. We passed several graveyards deep set in the midst of houses—dank, frouzy, rank, run-to-seed places, where

Pelions of "Sacred to the memory" were heaped upon Ossas of "Here lieth the remains," and out of which the lank sapless grass trembled through the railings and nodded feebly at the passers-by. Good places for ghosts these! City ghosts of misers and confidential clerks, and trustees who committed suicide just before the young gentleman whom they had had in trust came of age and would have infallibly found out all about their iniquities. I peered out of the cab in quest of any chance apparition, but saw none; and was very much astonished when the driver, to whom I had given particular instructions, pulled up before a brilliantly lighted doorway, round which several cadgers were disporting themselves. These youths received me with great delight, and one said, "You come along with me, sir! I'll take you to the hout and houtest old spectre in the neighbr'ood. This way, sir!" He led the way along a lighted passage, between rough brick walls, until we arrived at a barrier, where—after a muttered conversation between my guide and the janitor—a shilling was demanded of me, after paying which I was provided with a card talisman, and left to find my way alone. Down

a broad passage, on one side of which was a recess where sandwiches lay piled like deals in a timber-yard, where oranges were rolled up in pyramidal heaps of three feet high, and where there was so much ginger-beer that its simultaneous explosion must infallibly have blown the roof off the building, down a flight of asphalted stairs, at the bottom of which a fierce man wrung my card talisman from me and turned me into a large loose box, the door of which he shut behind me. A loose box with a couple of chairs in it, a looking-glass, a flap table—a loose box open on one side, looking through which opening I see hundreds of people ranged in tiers above each other. Turning to see what they are all intent on, I see a stage—I'm tricked! I'm done! the loose box is a private box, and I'm in a theatre.

Left to myself, what could I do but look at the stage, and, doing that, how could I fail to be intensely interested? I speedily made myself acquainted with the legend being there theatrically developed, and, beyond that the colour was, perhaps, a little heightened, I did not find it more or less preposterously unlike any thing that could, by any remote possibility,

ever have occurred than is usual in dramatic legends. The scene of action being laid at the present time, I found the principal character represented to be a BARONET (he had a name, but he was invariably spoken of by every body, either with yells of hatred or shoulder-shrugs of irony, as "the Baronet"), and certainly he was the most objectionable old gentleman I have ever seen. The mere fact of his walking about, in the present day, in a long claret-coloured coat, a low-crowned hat with a buckle in the front, and boots which, being apparently made of sticking-plaster, had tassels like bell-pulls, was in itself irritating; but his moral conduct was horrible. He seemed to have an insane desire for the possession of his neighbours' property, not felonious in his intentions, but imbued with a buying mania, and rabidly ferocious when said neighbours refused to sell. First among his coveted possessions stood the house and garden of a clergyman's widow (no mistake about her widowhood! the deepest black, and such a cap, all through the piece!), who obstinately refused to part with an inch of her ground. Baronet smiles blandly, and informs us that he will "have recourse to stratyjum." Widow

has two daughters, one very deep-voiced and glum, the other with her hair parted on one side (which, theatrically, always means good nature), and funny. Funny daughter is beloved by Baronet's son—unpleasant youth in cords, top-boots, and a white hat, made up after Tom King the highwayman, vide *Turpin's Ride to York*; or, *The Death of Black Bess* (Marks, Seven Dials), passim. Baronet proposes that son should get clergyman's daughter to steal lease of premises, promising to set son up in life, and allow him to marry object of affections. Son agrees, works upon daughter's vanity; daughter, who is vague in Debrett, is overcome by notion of being called the Right Honourable Mrs. —, a title which, as the wife of a baronet's son, she is clearly entitled to—steals the lease, hands it to son, who hands it to Baronet, who, having got it, nobly repudiates not merely the whole transaction, but son into the bargain: tells him he is not son, but merely strange child left in his care, and comes down and winks at audience, who howl at him with rage.

That was the most wonderful thing throughout the evening, the contest between the audience and the Baronet. Whenever the

Baronet made a successful move (and Vice had it all its own way for nearly a couple of hours), the audience howled and raved against him, called "Yah!" whistled, shrieked, and hooted, and the Baronet advanced to the footlights and grinned across them, as though he should say, "I'm still all right, in spite of you!" When a villain, who, for a sum of money advanced by the Baronet, had murdered an old man, and was afterwards seized with remorse, stole the lease from the Baronet's pocket, the multitude in the theatre cheered vociferously; but the Baronet, after proving that the purloined parchment was only a copy, and not the original document, which he still retained, calmly walked down to the front of the stage, and literally winked at the people, tapping his breast, where the lease was, in derision, and goading the audience to the extremity of frenzy.

There were several pleasant episodes in which the Baronet was the mainspring: hiding fifty-pound notes in the glum sister's bundle, accusing her of robbery, and having her locked up in his house, whence she was rescued by the murdering villain who had previously (out of remorse) set the house on fire; but at

length the widow, who a minute before had been remarkably lively, and had "given it" to the Baronet with great vehemence and cap-shaking, suddenly declared her intention of dying; and though a young gentleman with a sugar-loaf hat and a coat with a little cape to it, like the pictures of Robespierre, announced himself as a lawyer, who would defend her and hers against any thing and every body, she forthwith carried out her intention, sat down on a chair, and died out of hand. There was a faint pretext of sending for the doctor; but there was an evident fear on the part of most lest that practitioner should really restore the patient, and thus burk the great effect of the piece; so the idea was overruled, and the Baronet, advancing to the footlights, rubbed his hands in derision at the audience; and the audience, cognisant of the fact that the decease of the widow was necessary to the subsequent appearance of her ghost, merely answered with a subdued "Yah!" At this point my former conductor opened the box-door and beckoned me out. "Come in front," he said; "it's ghost-time!" The words thrilled to my very soul; I followed him in silence, and took my place in the boxes,

close by a lady whose time was principally occupied in giving natural sustenance to her infant, and an older female, apparently the child's grandmother, who was a victim to a disease which I believe is popularly known as the "rickets," and which impelled her at three-minute intervals to shudder throughout her frame, to rock herself to and fro, to stuff the carved and hooked black bone handle of an umbrella, that looked like a tied-up lettuce, into her mouth, and to grind out from between her teeth, clenched round the umbrella-handle, "Oh, deary, deary me!" On my other side were a youth and maiden, so devoted to each other that they never perceived my entrance into the box, and I had not merely to shout, but to shove, before I could effect a passage, when there was such a disentanglement of waists from arms, and interlaced hot hands, and lifting of heads from shoulders, that I felt uncomfortable and apologetic, whereas the real offenders speedily fell back into their old position, and evidently regarded me as a Byronic creature, to whom life was a blank.

The ghost did not appear at once. Though the widow had slipped into a very stiff position in her chair, and every body around her had

said either "Ha!" or "The fatal moment!" or "Alas!" or "All is over!" as their several tastes led them, it was thought necessary to make the fact of her death yet more clear; so upon the front parlour, where the sad occurrence took place, fell a vast body of clouds of the densest kind, out of which, to slow music, there came two or three ethereal persons with wings, which wagged in a suspicious manner, bearing the widow's body "aloft," as Mr. Dibdin has it with reference to Tom Bowling, and thereby copying in the most direct and unequivocal manner (but not more directly and unequivocally than I have seen it in theatres of grand repute, where critics babbled of the manager's transcendant stage-direction) Herr Lessing's picture of Leonore. To meet these, emerged, in mid-air from either side of the stage, other ethereal persons, also with wings, whose intended serenity of expression was greatly marred by the obstinacy of the machinery, which propelled them in severe jerks, at every one of which the set smile on their faces faded into a mingled expression of acute bodily pain and awful terror lest they should fall down: while, on a string like larks or a rope like onions, there swayed to and fro

across the proscenium a dozen of the stoutest and most unimaginative naked Cupids that ever got loose from a valentine, or were made by a property-man.

As the act-drop fell upon this scene, which in itself represented something not to be met with in every-day life, some distrust was expressed in my neighbourhood lest there should be nothing more ghostly than we had just witnessed; but the old lady with the umbrella set us to rights by recovering suddenly from a severe attack of rickets, and exclaiming, "*Them* ghosts! Oh, no, sir! In the next ack we shall see *her*, and which the music will play up for us to give attention." So accordingly, when the fiddles wailed, and the trombone and clarionet prostrated themselves figuratively in the dust, I looked with all my eyes, and saw the curtain rise upon the Baronet's apartment, which was the most singularly constructed room I ever beheld. The portion of the floor nearest to us was perfectly flat, as is the case with most floors, but after about three feet of flatness there rose in its centre, and stretching from side to side, a long, sloping, green mound, in military language a "glacis," up which the Baronet had to walk

when he wanted to proceed towards the back of the apartment, where all the chairs, tables, and furniture generally had withdrawn themselves, and up which he himself climbed, as though M. Vauban had taken the place of Mr. Cubitt, and as though outworks and entrenchments were as common in London drawing-rooms as lounging-chairs and grand pianos.

On the top of this entrenchment stood, on either side, two thick dumpy pillars, supporting a heavy piece of masonry, which joined them together at the top, and which looked like a portion of the ruins of the Temple of the Sun at Baalbek seen through the wrong end of the opera-glass: or, to use an illustration nearer home, like the front of the catacombs of Kensal Green or Highgate cemeteries. Between these pillars was a hazy vista into which the Baronet walked, and seated himself on a stool in the corner, so as to be quite out of the way, commenced informing us (without any apparent necessity for the statement) of his disbelief in all supernatural appearances, and of his thorough contempt for Death—ha! ha! The second of the two vocal double-knocks given by him in ha! ha!

had scarcely been given, when there appeared in the middle of the empty space behind the pillars a stereoscopic skeleton exactly like that which dances in the Fantoccini—so like, that one looked for the string which guides that puppet's movements (and which, of course, in the present instance, was not to be seen), and expected him momentarily to fall to pieces and re-unite in a comic manner. At this sight the Baronet appeared a little staggered; he said, "Ha! do I then behold thee?" and retreated several paces on his heels, but recovering himself, exclaimed, "'Tis a dream, an ill-yousion!" and advanced towards the skeleton, which disappeared, to return immediately armed with a dart, or harpoon, with which it made several well-intentioned but harmless thrusts at the Baronet, who appeared immensely flabbergasted by the harpoon, and begged piteously to be spared. Either the skeleton was moved by the appeal or he had work somewhere else, for he disappeared again; and no sooner was he gone than the Baronet so plucked up that he declared he defied Death altogether, and was beginning to be offensively joyous, when in the place where the skeleton had been, appeared the ghost of the widow

in her shroud! No mistake about it now! There she was, a little foreshortened, a little out of the perpendicular, leaning forward as though accustomed to a cramped and confined space, and not daring to stand upright! For the Baronet this was, to use a vulgar metaphor, a "corker." He rubbed his head, but there was nothing there; he tried a taunt, but the ghost answered him with deep-voiced briskness; he rushed towards her, and rushed right through her! Finally, he picked up from the table, where, as we know, they always lie in libraries, a long sword, with which he aimed a very unskilful blow at his visitant. The sword passed through the ghost, who was apparently tickled, for it exclaimed, "Ha! ha!" and disappeared, and the Baronet fell exhausted in the very spot where the ghost had been! Up went the lights, down went the curtain, and the audience gave one great gasp of relief, and pretended they hadn't been frightened—which they had!

Unquestionably! undoubtedly! The skeleton had been a failure; ribalds in the pit had mocked at him—had given tremulous cries of feigned terror—shouted "O-oh! m—y!" and pretended to bury their heads in their jacket-

collars; boys in the gallery had called upon him to dance, and had invited their friends to "look at his crinoline;" the arm of the youth in front of me tightened round the waist of the maiden with evident conveyance of the idea that *that* alone could them part; and the old lady with the umbrella had considered him a "mangy lot." But the ghost was a very different matter; when it appeared, not a sound in the pit, not a whisper in the gallery; all open-mouthed, eager, tremulous excitement! The old grandmother clasped the umbrella like a divining-rod, and muttered a hoarse "Deary—dea—ry me!" the mother let the infant fall flat and flaccid on her lap, the youth's arm unbent, and the maiden rising stiffly three inches from her seat, said, "Go'as!" and remained rigid. Only one sound floated on the air, and that was emitted by a French gentleman, with more buttons on his waistcoat than I ever saw on a similar amount of cloth (how on earth did a foreigner penetrate to Hoxton?), who clutched his curly-brimmed hat between his fat fists, and hissed out, "A—h! superbe!"

It was his testimony, and it is mine.

CHAPTER XIV.

VERY HARD UPON MY AUNT.

AT five o'clock on the evening of the 31st of December 1849, Mr. Twinch, of Grosvenor Street, rushed into his dining-room with a packet in his hand, sat down at a little Davenport writing-table in the window, and scribbled off the following letter:

“MY DEAR MADAM,—I am delighted to say that I have been able to keep my word, and herewith send you what you require. With best compliments, I am,

“Faithfully yours,

“PAYNHAM TWINCH.”

This note he folded round the packet, placed both in a stout envelope, which he addressed “Miss L. Pemberton, The Grove, Heavitree, near Exeter;” carried the packet to a neighbouring receiving-office, caused it to be duly registered, and with the receipt in his pocket returned home.

Miss Letitia Pemberton was my father's

youngest sister, a maiden lady of middle age, kind, amiable, and accomplished, whom every body liked for her good temper, and whom many of us younger ones regarded with deep interest on account of what we were pleased to term "her romance." For when Aunt Letitia was a girl she was very pretty, and was a county beauty, and a reigning toast for miles round: she had scores of admirers, but behaved very scornfully to all of them, and she had acquired a reputation of being thoroughly heartless, when she chose to tumble head-over-ears in love with a Mr. Butterworth, a fair-haired, mild, spoony young man, who had come up from Oxford to read with my father during the long vacation. Of course Mr. Butterworth responded, and the affair was progressing to the great satisfaction of the lovers, and the intense delight of my father, who thereby was relieved from much of Mr. Butterworth's society and all his tuition. But when my grandfather, who was what is called "one of the old school," a remarkably peppery veteran, discovered what was going on, he showed Mr. Butterworth the door, and was with great difficulty restrained from kicking him through it. Aunt Letitia

wept and sulked by turns, but it was of no use; and soon afterwards my father heard that Butterworth had left Oxford, and gone out as private secretary and companion to an old gentleman who held some high official appointment in South America. Miss Letitia redoubled her lamentations; but that was the last that was heard of Mr. Butterworth.

Until years after, when my grandfather had been long since dead, my father long since married, myself and my sister long since born, and my Aunt Letitia long since resident with us at The Grove, my father, in London on some business, accidentally ran against a portly gentleman in the Strand, who, turning round with hurt dignity, revealed the features of the mild Mr. Butterworth of bygone years. He told my father that his patron had died, leaving him his fortune; that he had married in South America, but that his wife had died within a twelvemonth of their union, and that he had come home to settle in England. He asked my father for all his news, and wound up by saying, "And—Miss Letitia—is—she—still—?" And my father said she was—still—but that Butterworth had better see for himself. This proposition seemed to suit Mr.

Butterworth entirely. He should be in Devonshire about the end of the year; he had business at Exeter. Finally, it was decided that he should dine on New Year's-day at The Grove, and pass the night there.

When my father came home with the news, my Aunt Letitia was tremendously affected. We noticed next morning that a kind of dust-trap of black lace, skewered on to a comb which she was in the habit of wearing at the back of her head, had been got rid of, and that she had a mass of plaits in its place; we noticed that the usual night-shirt hemming for the charity children had been put aside, and that a large portion of her day was spent in devouring the poetical works of the late Lord Byron, in a Galignani edition brought from Paris by my father many years before. We noticed—we could not help noticing—how pretty she looked with her bright complexion, her white teeth, her neat little figure, and as the days passed by she seemed to grow more and more animated. One day, however—I remember it perfectly, it was the 16th of December, and we had boiled beef for dinner—my aunt was taken dreadfully ill; it was at the dinner-table, when, without the slightest

warning, she suddenly gave a sharp scream, placed her handkerchief to her mouth, and rushed from the room. My mother followed, and so did my sister, but the latter had my aunt's bedroom door slammed in her face. When my mother rejoined us, she had a little private conversation with my father, and we were then told that Aunt Letitia was very ill, and would probably have to keep her room for many days. All sorts of invalid's delicacies, broth, soups, calf's-foot jelly, and sago puddings, were sent up to her; but she did not reappear amongst us, and it seemed very doubtful whether she would be able to do so by the time of Mr. Butterworth's visit.

I must now change the venue, as the lawyers call it, of my story. At midnight, on the night when Mr. Twinch posted his letter, the down night-mail running between Paddington and Plymouth was within ten miles of the station at Exeter. In the travelling post-office two clerks, with their warm caps drawn far down over their ears, were sorting letters for dear life, one or other of them turning round now and then and objurgating old Barnett, the mail-guard, who occasionally opened the window and pushed his head out to inform

himself of the train's whereabouts, bringing it back always with a puff, and a snort, and an exclamation that the frost was a "reg'lar black 'un to-night, and no mistake." Close upon Exeter now, all old Barnett's sacks for delivery are ready on the floor close by the door, handy for the porters to seize, old Barnett himself sitting on the pile, clapping his hands, stamping his feet, and whistling to himself softly the while. With a protracted grind, a bump, and a shriek, the train ran alongside the Exeter platform, and old Barnett pushed back the sliding-door of the travelling-office and handed the sacks to the expectant porter. But ere the man touched them, he said, while his face was ghastly white and his voice trembled, "Lord, Mr. Barnett! such a smash to-night!"

"Smash!" said old Barnett; "what, an accident?"

"Pooh!" said the porter, "not that, that would be nothing—no—they've robbed the up-mail!"

"Robbed the up-mail!"

"Ah, tender broke open, bags all cut and hacked, and letters all strewn about the floor. You never see such like!"

"The deuce they have!" said Barnett, after a moment's pause; "well, Simon, my boy, I'll take devilish good care they don't rob my mail. Here, clear these bags out, and let's pass." He jumped down on to the platform, ran to the next carriage, which was the "post-office tender," a second-class carriage fitted up for the reception of mail-bags, unlocked the door with a key, saw all secure, relocked the door, and returned to the travelling post-office just as the train began to move.

Old Tom Barnett had been in the Post-office service in one capacity or other for nearly forty years, during the whole of which time no word of complaint had ever been uttered against him, and, a strict disciplinarian himself, he naturally felt that there must have been some dereliction of duty on the part of his brother-guard of the up-mail, of which the robbers had taken advantage. Consequently, as the train flew through the black darkness at forty-mile-an-hour speed, Barnett, at five-minute intervals, lowered the window of the travelling-office and peered out in the direction of his "tender." He could not distinguish much; all he could make out (and this principally from the shadows thrown on the em-

bankments) was that the train was, as usual, a short one: that immediately after the engine came two second-class carriages, then the travelling-office in which he was, then his tender, then a first-class carriage, and then finally a luggage-van. Nothing particular was to be seen, nothing at all (save the invariable ramping, roaring, and rattle) was to be heard; on they sped through the darkness, and never stopped until they came to Bridgewater, where old Barnett descended, took his key from his pocket, unlocked the tender, and—fell back, calling, at the top of his voice, “Help!—thieves!—damme, they’ve done me!” At his cry, two of the train-guards came running up, and turned their bull’s-eye lanterns on to the tender, into which Barnett at once climbed. The mail-bags, ordinarily so neatly arranged, lay scattered in pell-mell disorder on the floor, the Plymouth bag had been shifted from the hook on which it had been hung, and, on examining it, Barnett found it had been opened, and re-tied but not re-sealed; short bits of string, splotches of sealing-wax, and drifting pieces of tindered paper covered the floor of the tender, and the window on the further side—which had been carefully closed

when they left Bristol—was open. “They’ve done me!” roared old Barnett again; “but they sha’n’t escape! they’re somewhere in this train, and I’ll have them out!”

At this juncture two gentlemen, one of whom was recognised as Mr. Marlow, one of the directors of the company, the other as Mr. Joyce, the great contractor, to whom the safe keeping of a great portion of the permanent way was confided, came up and inquired what was the matter. On the affair being explained to them, they agreed with Barnett as to the necessity for closely searching the train, and all proceeded at once to the first-class carriage which was immediately next to the post-office tender. This, as is usual, was divided into three double compartments. The first was that from which Messrs. Marlow and Joyce had just emerged, and was, of course, empty; so was the second; in the nearest division of the third compartment was an old gentleman named Parker, well known on the line as a solicitor of Modbury, whose business frequently took him to London. The door between the divisions in this carriage was closed and the blind drawn down. On being recognised, Mr. Parker at once answered to

his name, and stated that the further division was occupied by two men who had entered the carriage at Bristol, and had at once closed the door and drawn down the blind. Had he noticed any thing further about them? No, he had not. Yes! as they got in, he noticed something dragging after them; unperceived by them, he put down his hand and found it to be a piece of string. He cut off what remained on his side when they shut the door, and here it was. Barnett looked at it, and exclaimed, "Bag-string! official bag-string without a doubt!" One of the railway guards then opened the door and looked into the other division. In it were two men; one of them, with a Jim-Crow hat pulled over his eyes and enveloped in a large thick cloak, was lying with his legs upon the opposite seat, and was apparently suffering from toothache, as he held his pocket-handkerchief up to his face; the other, a tall man in a dark Chesterfield greatcoat, was screwed into his corner of the carriage, and appeared to be asleep. "Tickets, please!" called out old Barnett; and as the reclining man raised himself to get at his ticket, the handkerchief fell from his face, and the railway-guard, recognising him at

once, called out, "Hallo, Pond! is that you? What are you doing down the line?" Instead of answering this question, Pond told the guard to go to the devil; but Mr. Marlow had heard the exclamation, and asked the guard whether the man in the carriage was Pond, formerly a guard in their service, who had been dismissed some six months before on suspicion of robbery. The guard replying in the affirmative, old Barnett's previous suspicions were fully confirmed, and he insisted on having both the men (who, of course, declared they were strangers to each other) thoroughly searched. Nothing at all extraordinary was found on either of them, but from the pocket of the carriage in which they had been travelling were taken a crape mask, a pair of false mustachios, a bit of wax-candle, and some sealing-waxed string. As the time for the starting of the train had now arrived, old Barnett and Mr. Parker travelled in one compartment with Pond, while the two railway-guards took charge of his anonymous friend, and thus they journeyed to Plymouth, where, on their arrival at the station, the prisoners were at once taken into one of the waiting-rooms under Barnett's custody, while

the others proceeded to search the carriages for further traces of the robbery. That was an anxious time for old Tom Barnett; he felt convinced that these were the culprits; but if they had made away with their spoil, if something were not found the identification of which could be ratified beyond doubt, he knew that the prosecution would fail. At last the men entered bearing a bundle. "Here it is; all right!" said one of them.

"What is it?" asked Barnett.

"A lot o' registered letters, most of 'em broke open, tied up in pocket-'ankerchief and shoved under the seat where Pond was sittin'."

"Brayvo!" cried old Barnett, "brayvo! But have you got any thing that can be identified—any thing that can be swore to?"

"Well, I don't know!" said the guard, grinning. "I don't think there'll be much difficulty in the owner's swearin' to *this*!" and he held up the torn cover of the packet which Mr. Twinch had posted. Old Barnett glanced at its contents, then clapped his hands and burst into a roar of laughter.

The fact that the postman who called at The Grove as usual on the 1st of January brought no letter for my Aunt Letitia, created

immense consternation in our family circle. My mother seemed much vexed; and even my father, usually a taciturn man, allowed that it was "confoundedly unfortunate." As for my aunt, we never heard what happened, but it was generally understood that she had a relapse. The day passed on, and Mr. Butterworth arrived; he manifested great concern at hearing of my aunt's illness, and plainly showed that he had missed the real object of his visit. He was dull and silent; and when my mother left the gentlemen sitting over their wine, scarcely a word was exchanged between them, and my father was just nodding off to sleep when he was aroused by a loud ring at the gate, followed by the entrance of the servant, who stated that a rough-looking man wanted to speak to Miss Letitia, and would take no denial. My father immediately went out into the hall, closely followed by Mr. Butterworth, and there they found a tall fellow, who introduced himself as a member of the county constabulary, and who reiterated his wish to speak with (apparently reading from something in his hand) "Miss L. Pemberton."

"You can't see her," said my father:

"she's ill, and in her room. I'm her brother; what do you want?"

"Well, sir," said the man ponderously, "there have bin a robbery, and we want the lady to swear to some of the swag."

"Some of the swag?" said Mr. Butterworth.

"Some of the swag!" repeated my father. "What does the man mean?"

"Why the man means just this," said the constable; "the mail's been robbed, and 'mongst the things broke open was this addressed to Miss L. Pemberton. There won't be no difficulty about her recognisin' it, I fancy." And as the wretch spoke he drew from a packet a top row of dazzling false teeth!

Yes, that was the secret of Aunt Letitia's illness. A year or two before, when nature failed her, she called in the assistance of art, and availed herself of the services of Mr. Twinch; but an accident occurring on the fatal boiled-beef day, the teeth were sent back to their creator, who had the strictest injunctions to return them, renovated, by the first of January. Mr. Twinch obeyed these orders implicitly; and, had not Mr. Pond and

his friend selected that very night for the robbery of the mail, all would have been well. As it was, the teeth were detained by the lawyers for the prosecution until after the trial, at which they were produced, and at which my aunt also was compelled to appear; though strongly against her will. But, when once on her mettle, she behaved with great spirit, and gave her evidence with such clearness (albeit with a pretty lisp), that she was complimented by the judge, and was the main cause of Mr. Pond and his friend being found guilty, and sentenced to fifteen years' transportation.

It has never been known to this day whether Mr. Butterworth was in court. At all events, three days after he called at The Grove, and then found that he had business which would oblige him to take lodgings in the neighbourhood for a month. At the end of that time I was measured for a new suit of clothes, and wore them one morning when they seemed to have dinner—champagne, cold fowls and things—at twelve o'clock; when Mr. Butterworth had on a blue coat, and when Aunt Letitia laughed a good deal, and cried all over my new jacket, as she bade us good-bye, and told us she was then Mrs. Butterworth.

CHAPTER XV.

HOTSPUR STREET, W.

READER, I am a vagabond ! seriously and literally a vagabond ! born with vagabond tastes and habits, of parents who, by Act of Parliament, were vagabonds (and rogues too, for the matter of that !), as were Shakespeare, Garrick, Quin, Kemble, Mrs. Siddons, and all others of the same profession. As a boy I pursued a vagabond career ; was a dirty boy—a hot boy—an untractable boy—a boy with mangled knees and burst elbows—a defiant, truculent, idle, impudent, chaffing boy—clever as to orchard burglaries ; insolvent through an overweening love of hardbake ; premature in a longing for tobacco !—a boy to whom Virgil was as an enemy, and Euclid an abomination, but whose friendship for a duodecimo Byron was unbounded, and who could quote long passages from a thumbled and dirty Keats, purchased at a book-stall from the proceeds of a

sale of a Cornelius Nepos. As a young man, I have still been a vagabond; not the "Tom, you vagabond!" the nephew of the rich and testy old uncle in the standard comedy, as Tom is generally a dashing spendthrift, who consorts with dukes and marquises, and loses large sums at the Cocoa Tree; but a person with a taste for the odd and strange, for curious company and associates, for night-wanderings in out-of-the-way places, for long summer days spent with brown-skinned gipsies and spangled acrobats, for long and familiar conversations with Punch proprietors, cheap Jacks, and other frequenters of the racecourse; with a love for talent, natural or acquired, in any shape, however humble; and with an unmitigated aversion to mediocre respectability. I have seen a good deal of respectability, and respect it not. I have known many respectable people, and wondered at them and their ways. Clerks, mostly,—legal, government-official, or public-company clerks,—philoprogenitive to an extent, with a leaning towards Dalston or Camden Town as a residence; strange and fantastic as regards apparel; people who look upon an oratorio at Exeter Hall as a recreation; call actors

“performers ;” and ignore Tennyson. In their turn, I will say the respectables love not me nor my fellows. They cannot comprehend us ; and though the obnoxious Act of Parliament aforementioned has been repealed, and though they see us inhabiting good houses, paying rent, rates, and taxes, attending church, serving on juries and committees, and performing all proper acts of good citizenship, they still look upon us as beyond the pale of acquaintance and recognition. These are the middle classes, the suburbans, the Pancras-cum-Bloomsbury’s—as distinguished from the swells, the upper ten thousand, who adore us—and the fashionable moneyocracy, who follow their lead ; who think us so quaint, so curious ; who say we are such entertaining persons, so amusing, and with such a fund of humour ; and who, with all their adoration, talk, and recognition, have as much real feeling for us as they have for Mr. Gunter, who supplies the ices, or Mr. Edgington, who builds the extempore Turkish kiosk on the first landing-place.

And who are *we* of whom I am writing ? What people occupy this curiously-anomalous position,—this Mahomet’s coffin-like suspen-

sion between envy and scorn? What is that queer world which I have undertaken to describe? I will tell you. The subjects of my essay are the amusing classes; those who belong to none of the three recognised professions; and who, without being sharpers or swindlers, yet contrive to live "by their wits." Such are the literary men, the newspaper-writers, the actors, singers, and musicians; the entertainment-givers, the lecturers, the artists in oil, in water-colour, and on wood,—finally, my queer world is the *monde des artistes*.

A queer world indeed! A world of hard strivings, and, generally speaking, small results! In some degree, a hollow, shamming world—a world with a mask on—a mask bearing a pleasant expression and a fixed grin, behind which the face of the wearer is lengthy, pale, anxious, and careworn! A world the members of which have a somewhat difficult part to play; for you, my public, come to us for recreation or distraction; and we, who live to please, must please to live. We must never be ill, dull, or dispirited; we must leave our sick couches at the sound of the overture—put off our mourning garments and don

our motley when we hear the tramp of the audience coming in.

With small means, and yet requiring some peculiar comforts, the denizens of this queer world have some difficulty in accommodating themselves with appropriate residences. The artist must have spacious rooms with a "north light," at a rent to suit the exigencies of his income, and yet sufficiently near the great thoroughfares for the convenience of models and sitters; the musician must not be subjected to the resentment of soulless neighbours who object to the perpetual repetition of a symphony, rehearsed and re-rehearsed until perfection is acquired, or who are inimical to the pursuit of the vocal art under the most trying difficulties or at the latest hours; the actor must be near his theatre; the newspaper-writer near his office; the *littérateur's* home must not be beyond the reach of the always worn and sleepy printer's devil;—and so it comes that this queer world takes possession of one especial *locale*, and holds it for its own.

The locale is as queer as its inhabitants; a bygone locale—a place that has been a quarter of the town once grand and fashionable, but now lodging-let and boarding-housed; vast

gloomy mansions, with treble windows and enormous doors—the area railings furnished with extinguishers, in which the Jeameses of the bygone generations buried their flaming torches after safely depositing their mistresses at Lady Bab's drum. Inside, the rooms are also vast and gloomy too, save those occupied by the artists, whose windows are generally carried up to the floor above; the staircases are broad and capacious, as are the landings and the entrance-hall. Hotspur Street may be reckoned the head-quarters of the queer world; and the houses in Hotspur Street are all of the pattern just described. The street itself combines all the requirements of its denizens: one turning takes you into Oxford Street, the other end leads into Tottenham Court Road—that thoroughfare where all the necessities of life are procurable at the lowest prices, and where the shops, relying on the dissipated manners of their customers, keep open until incredible hours. In the hot summer weather, when the cabbages lying exposed on Tottenham-Court-Road stalls are turned brown by the sun—when the gentleman with the Italian name gives up the chestnuts which he has vended during the winter, and produces parti-coloured

slabs of damp and clinging nastiness which he calls "penny ices"—when the contents of butchers'-shops, always unpleasant to the eye, become equally offensive to the nose—then are the precincts of Hotspur Street invaded by foreign gentlemen of fantastic appearance, in wondrous coats, cloudy linen, dapper little boots, and trousers apparently manufactured of brown-paper—these are the *confrères* of many of the attic inhabitants, who are attached to the Opera-band and chorus—dark, sallow-faced men with shaved blue-beards and short-cropped hair, convenient for the wearing of wigs:—then is a great Saturnalia carried on; Alphonse and Max tear down the stairs, rush into the street, and, seizing upon Jules and Heinrich, enarm them then and there, and rub beard to beard with frank sincerity and hearty welcome: then the thumping of pianos, the twanging of stringed and the blasts of wind instruments are redoubled; while from the open attic windows float such clouds of smoke as almost to justify the apprehensions of nervous neighbours that the premises are on fire.

Foreigners, however, are not the only excitement in Hotspur Street; for the carriages that discharge their living cargoes at Jack

Belton's door, and crawl lazily up and down until they are signalled to return and "take up," are the envy of the neighbourhood, and attract an enormous audience of the infantile population.

Jack Belton lives at No. 136, the large house with the portico, and is now one of the first artists of the day—smiled on by the fairest of the aristocracy, courteously received by dukes and marquises, actually in favour with the Royal Academy, and not snubbed by the Hanging Committee! Times, however, were not always so brilliant with him; slowly, and step by step, has he advanced in his profession; every round of the ladder has been fought for until his present position was attained. Jack's father was a merchant-prince—a Russell-Square man—a person of fabulous wealth, who, like that noble monarch George the Second, "hated boetry and bainting," and lived but for his money, his dinners, and his position in the City; a fat, pompous, thick-headed man, with a red face, a loud voice, a portly presence, and overwhelming watch-chain; a man before whom the Bank-porters bowed their cocked-hats with awe, and at whose name the messengers of the Stock Ex-

change did obeisance out of sheer reverence; a man with many services of plate—with a splendid library which he never entered—with a country-house, and pineries, and lakes, and preserves; a man who looked down upon his son Jack (at the age of sixteen but a puny lad) with contempt, and wondered “why the son of a British merchant should demean himself by messin’ with chalks and paints, like any poor strugglin’ artist!” When Jack was sixteen the crash came. Mr. Belton pleasantly over-speculated himself: shares that should have been at a premium were at a discount—a public company, which was to have made the fortunes of its directors and shareholders, suddenly burst up; Bank-porters bowed their cocked-hats no longer—men on ’Change gathered in knots, looked grave, and shook their heads ominously as they spoke of “Belton’s business.” If you were in Jack’s confidence now, he might perhaps tell you a touching story of those days—how, as he was about to mount his pony and canter away, followed by his groom in livery, his sister, one year older than himself, came out and whispered him—how the horses were sent away; and the boy and girl went into the splendid library, where,

for the first time, Jack heard the awful tidings that "Papa was ruined!" You would hear how these two brave hearts consulted and planned brave deeds—ay, and young as they were, executed them! How Jack tramped half over London with a lithographic stone under his arm, offering his drawings for sale; how at last one spirited publisher was found who accepted them, paid the boy for his work, and brought it out in a handsome manner; how the style found favour with the public; how Jack received commissions from his publishing friend for an unlimited amount of work; and how, when carpets were festooned from the windows of the Russell-Square mansion, and posting-bills were placarded against the door, announcing, in the choicest language of the late eminent Mr. James Jobbings, that the elegant and distinguished furniture, the noble paintings, the rare wines, the fine collection of ancient and modern authors, &c. were for sale within, Jack piloted the delicate sister and broken-spirited old man through the crowd of carpet-capped salesmen and jabbering Jews, and conveyed them to a neat, respectable lodging hired by him, and maintained for many years after by the products of his un-

tiring industry. Were you in his confidence, I say, he might tell you somewhat of this story; and now I will tell you more. I will tell you that, in the lapse of time, the old man died, blessing and reverencing the son he had once despised; I will tell you that the delicate sister is now one of the sweetest young matrons in England, married to a literary man whose name is a household word in every place where great talents and pure thoughts are appreciated. I will tell you that, if I am not mistaken—and I've a keen eye for this sort of thing—this present summer will not pass away without our seeing Jack himself (let me be polite for once, and say Mr. Belton, R.A.!) united to a sister of his sister's husband—a girl fitted for him in every way. God bless you, Jack! God bless you, noble mind and clever head! After marriage you will quit our quarter and migrate to more fashionable regions. But we shall watch your career; every succeeding triumph will be hailed with delight, and your name will always be mentioned with enthusiasm in the queer world which you once adorned.

Do you see that blear-eyed, wizen-faced, white-haired man, shambling up the sunny

side of the street, and rubbing his short and dingy blue cloak against the area railings as he passes? That is old Solfa, and old Solfa's cloak! He is never seen without that cloak: in it he takes his walks abroad, in it he sits at home, and encircled in its scanty folds it is firmly believed he takes his rest. Jack Gabbler, who knows every thing and every body, or, at all events, who pretends to if he does not, says he called upon Solfa very early one morning; that Solfa's voice answered him as from beneath distant bedclothes, and that on his demanding an interview, Solfa came out to him enveloped in his cloak, and apparently nothing else! He is a very old man now, but in his day he was great. An admirable musician, a pleasant singer, master of every instrument, and being neither too proud to accompany a song, nor too modest to sit in the middle of a crowded room and sing pretty little French *romans*, accompanying himself on a guitar slung round his neck by a broad blue ribbon, Solfa was a great acquisition in a country-house, and went into very excellent society. He did not wear the blue cloak then, as you would readily perceive in the portrait which hangs over his looking-glass, and which

he always shows to every new friend. There he is gorgeous in a huge-collared coat, in pantaloons tied with strings at the ankles, in ribbed stockings and pumps. "*C'était dans les jours de ma première jeunesse!*" says the old man, pointing to it with a trembling hand, "bé—for I was old Solfa, as zey call me now." And he will tell you a long maudlin story about his wife, whom he adored, "*Oh, Sophie! comme je t'aimais!*" and who is dead. I should, however, advise you not to believe this part of the narrative, as rumour whispers that he utterly neglected Sophie, that he was always out at parties, leaving his wife moping at home (quite like Tom Moore in a small way, isn't it?), and it was firmly believed that he was in the habit of correcting her by personal chastisement. Now his day is over, his friends dead or grown very steady, and his place in society occupied by younger men. His voice is cracked; and at an evening party a man with a guitar and blue ribbon would only be laughed at; so Solfa has retired into private life, and given himself up entirely to what has long been his ruling passion, the desire for making money. He would go any where or do any thing which would turn out remune-

rative; he buys things at a wonderfully low rate, and sells them for large prices; he can beat down the strongest-minded Jews, and vanquish them in their own exclusive territories, the private sales and auction-rooms of London. He attends the periodical auctions with the utmost regularity; and I have seen him coming up Hotspur Street in the gloom of the evening with the scanty cloak extended to its utmost limits, to act as a covering for a large pier-glass which he was carrying beneath it. When I first knew Solfa, he one day pulled out of his pocket a very pretty watch, a lady's watch, enamelled and set with diamonds. I was more foolish in those days, perhaps, than I am now; and I thought of a young person whose birthday was close at hand, and whose bright eyes would look brighter still were I to present her with the watch as a *gage d'amitié*! well, perhaps *d'amour*! Solfa was, of course, disposed to sell it, and though he asked a high price, under such circumstances money is "no object," and the watch became mine. When the purchase was concluded and the money paid, Solfa said, "I vill gif you leetle advice! Ze vatch is a goot vatch; vear him two year, then sell him! I

have vore him two year myself, and I think four year more he be no good."

This is his policy, the true policy of the present day—buying in the cheapest and selling in the dearest market; and by the exercise of much worldly wisdom and arithmetical shrewdness, he has collected together a large fortune. His rooms, two small attics, are crowded with clocks, pictures, statuettes, and objects of *virtu*, constantly changing, and all yielding a per-centage. Some day he will be found dead in that back room. He has no relations, no friends; but he tells every one he has made a will, and he looks so benevolently at each of us as he says it, that I am sometimes disposed to think we have distant hopes of being down for a legacy, and that is why we stand his stories of bygone days with so much patience.

We have very few actors left in our queer world now, though at one time they used to abound there. But they have migrated to Brompton and Chelsea, where there is quite a histrionic colony; and whence, if you lounge down Piccadilly at about six o'clock in the fine afternoons, you may see them hastening to their avocations in shoals—heavy tragedy and

low comedy chatting together outside the omnibuses, while the heroines of tear-drawing melodrame and *piquante* farce come rattling up in broughams and cabs. These are great times for the gents; they love to see an actor off the stage, and it is believed that many of them, if they could make the acquaintance of Mr. Paul Bedford, and hear him call them by their Christian names in his rolling voice, would die happy. When they see any theatrical persons in the street, they watch their movements closely, and are much disappointed at not perceiving any eccentricity in their walk or manner, hoping that after a few steps the actor would invert himself, and proceed for the rest of his journey on his hands, or that upon calling a cab he would spring into it head-foremost, and be seen no more.

In Hotspur Street I think there is not a single actor left,—for you can scarcely call Spouter an actor now. At one time they say he was wonderful in second-rate parts; and in the days of the Kembles and the elder Kean he used to be constantly engaged, playing what is technically called “youthful tragedy, *jeune-premier*, and genteel comedy,” such as Cassio, Mercutio, Orlando, Don Felix, &c. They say

he was particularly handsome and *distingué*-looking; and they tell me that marchionesses and duchesses were in love with him, and nightly appeared in certain seats when he acted. They tell me this, and I receive it as a legend. I do not think many ladies of title are now-a-days in love with our theatrical young gentlemen. They say that Spouter's appearance and manners so charmed, that the Prince Regent invited him to Carlton House, and would have proved an invaluable friend to him had his Royal Highness not soon discovered, what was really the fact, that, beyond a handsome person, Spouter had no charm; that he was a dull, soulless person, who learnt his words by rote, and repeated them, with certain conventional gestures, without the slightest knowledge of their real signification.

But the "first gentleman in Europe," with all his folly, was a much better judge of ability than half his subjects; and by hundreds of families Spouter was still worshipped and invited. There is a portrait of him by Clint still in the possession of the Roscius Club; he is standing as Mercutio, in the celebrated "Queen-Mab" speech, and the animation of his handsome features is especially well ren-

dered. This picture was engraved, and all the young ladies of thirty years ago had a print of Spouter hanging in their bed-rooms; those young ladies are now middle-aged matrons; a new generation has arisen which knows not Spouter; and the hook in the wall on which Mercutio erst hung, is now occupied by a sweet portrait of the Rev. Cyprian Genuflex, ornamented with the autograph signature of the darling curate, and the date—"Eve of Saint Boanerges."

Yes, Spouter's day is over. He is an old man now, in a brown wig; but he doesn't remember the lapse of time, and so pads and paints, and toothes and calves himself, that at a distance he does not look above forty-five. He is slightly deaf, too; and so accustomed has he been to flattery, that, whenever a lady addresses him, and he has not exactly caught what she said, he imagines it must be a compliment, and bows his head, saying, in a deprecating manner, "Oh! you're very kind, but I am no longer young!"

He has long since retired from the stage, and gives lessons in elocution. Looking from my window on bright summer mornings, I often see his clients at Spouter's door; heavy,

awkward country actors, who have received traditional accounts of Mercutio's polished elegance, and have come up for tuition; Belgravian curates in long black coats, high-buttoned waistcoats, and linen dog-collars in lieu of cravats. There is the sofa-pillow transformed into the dead body of Cæsar, and over it does Horace Mattins speak Antony's oration; there does Mr. Bellows, of the T. R. Stockton-upon-Tees, set forth that his name is Norval, and sneer at the bucolic disposition of his parent.

These are some of the characters in my queer world: the history of the others must be reserved for some future occasion.

CHAPTER XVI.

GAZETTING EXTRAORDINARY.

QUIEN SABE? Who knows? is an exclamation constantly in the mouth of every Spaniard, from the hidalgo to the water-carrier. *Que sçais-je?* What do I know? perpetually asks Michael de Montaigne in his Essays. When they prated of the universal knowledge of some one to Archdeacon Paley, the old theologian bade them ask their friend if he knew how oval frames were turned. We are told that the cobbler should stick to his last, and that, provided he is acquainted with all the appliances of his trade, the mysteries of under and double-soling, welting, pressing, fronting, clumping, taking up, screw-pegging, and beveling the edges, he need not bother himself about flints in the drift, or waste his midnight oil in endeavouring to find an antidote to disinfecting fluid. But suppose he does not know all about his own trade—suppose the

cobbler has not got the length of his last properly in his mind—suppose there are combinations of cobbling of which he is ignorant—a style of boot-making of which he has never heard—what then? This is just where the shoe pinches the writer who has now the honour to address you. The desk is his lap-stone, the pen his awl, the ink his thread, the paper his material. He calls himself a skilled workman, and as such he ought to know all the branches of journalism, the trade to which he is affiliated. He thought he did know them all, in knowing the ordinary daily papers, the weekly press, the “organs” of various classes, the “sporting organ,” with its singular phraseology and recondite lore; the illustrated papers, wherein are always to be found exactly the same crowds of blob-headed faceless people staring with the same interest at royal processions, railway accidents, volunteer reviews, or the laying of foundation-stones, and wherein, week after week, with singular pertinacity, are presented engravings of trowels used in the last-named operation, engravings of inkstands presented to mayors, and engravings of other deeply-interesting trophies. He knew that architects and builders, booksellers and pub-

lishers, had periodicals specially devoted to their interests, and well conducted; and he once saw *The Grocer*, and learnt from its pages that there were groceries called manna-croup and melado, and cheeses known as Gouda, Kauter, and Edam, new milk. But it is only within the last few days that he has become acquainted with the existence of two publications of very peculiar qualities—organs steeped from the title to the imprint in matter relating to poverty and crime. They are both worth glancing through.

The first is owned by, edited by, and bought by, our—your—every body's—uncle. Here it is (London edition), price three-pence, or ten shillings per annum, eight large quarto pages, *The Pawnbroker's Gazette*. Not "News," or "Journal," or "Herald," but "Gazette," as if to pleasantly remind its readers of bankruptcies, and unredeemed pledges, and forced sales consequent thereupon. Printed and published in the highly legal and erst Insolvent-Court locality of Serle's Place, Lincoln's Inn, this valuable organ has pursued the pawning tenor of its way for the last twenty-five years, gladdening the hearts of its subscribers by appearing with

unfailing regularity once in every week. It bloomed into existence, therefore, concurrently with chartism and other national benefits; perhaps dilated on the eternal fitness of pawnbrokers on the occasion of the Queen's marriage, the Duke of Wellington's funeral, and other great celebrations wherein portable property changed hands, and is now ably deprecating "the restrictions upon trade which are contained in the twenty-first section of the Pawnbroker's Act." We learn from the number before us that "recent events naturally attract attention" to these restrictions, and ignorantly wonder what these "recent events" can possibly be. Carefully perusing this leading article, we come upon what seems the self-evident proposition, that "pawnbroking is a delicate operation," and are at once plunged into a reverie on the delicacy of pawning. We, in our utter ignorance, read "pawnbroking" from the outside point of view. Irresolute paces in front of the shop, mock interest in the articles for sale, affectedly careless swaggerings through the front or purchaser's door, and furtive dartings into the private entrance round the corner, are the only images the phrase "delicate operation" conjures up.

What can you expect of a man who never heard of the baleful twenty-first section, and who had no notion of pawnbrokers save as stern appreciative beings, mysteriously blessed with an unlimited supply of ready-money, and entertaining, to a man, cynical doubts as to the value of jewelry, and an unpleasant distrustfulness as to the quality of gold? But this "delicate operation" refers, not to the tendering, but to the acceptance of pledges, which, says the *Gazette*, "calls for great experience and knowledge of the world in those engaged in it."

We believe this so implicitly, that we find ourself sneering with the writer at "no person under the age of sixteen being permitted to receive pledges," and saying with him that it savours of "the burlesque conditions of the oath which our fathers were presumed to take at Highgate." By this time we have lost all sympathy with pawners, and are so imbued with the spirit of the paper as to feel every inch a Pawnee. Adopting, as is our habit, the tone and opinions of the journal we are reading, we assert boldly that "the poor and ignorant are many of them most improvident in their habits;" we regret "it is impossible

to repress this kind of improvidence by Act of Parliament;" we laugh with scorn at the absurdity of the supposition that "the pawnbroker has a natural bias towards the receipt of stolen goods;" and we say that it is annoying to the regular licensed trader "to see the well-intentioned efforts of the legislature only play into the hands of the dolly-shop keeper." We read the peroration of the article with a complacent feeling that it "settles" all profane people who would cast a doubt upon the divine right of pawnbroking; and so come triumphantly to the answers to correspondents. We are gratified to learn from the first of these that "in the event of any article pledged being found on redemption to have become damaged by rats and mice," we (regarded as a pawnbroker) are not liable to make good such damage, provided (and this is all-important) we "keep up such an efficient staff of cats as a prudent man would be bound to do under such circumstances." Before we have decided on the exact minimum number of those domestic animals consonant with prudence, we are plunged into another "answer," wherefrom we find that under certain circumstances (not named) "the magistrates have

the power to order the delivery of the property;" and that we "can do nothing but submit until the pledger returns to England;" when, if he has sworn falsely, he may "be prosecuted for perjury." Turning in due course to the police intelligence, we find it has been carefully selected with an eye to the interests of the trade. Impudent robbery of coats from a pawnbroker's; a daring fellow who has broken a pawnbroker's window; a pawnbroker charged with dealing in plate without a license; and a pawnbroker as witness against a prisoner—are the principal cases reported; they curiously serve to show the various phases of life permeated by the golden balls.

The report of the monthly meeting of the committee of "The Metropolitan Pawnbrokers' Protection Society" is also very agreeable reading, though we regret to find that "the effort to have an annual dinner this year was unsuccessful," and that "out of one hundred and seventy-three invitations issued, each requesting the courtesy of a reply, only twenty-one had met with any response." This regret is soon dissipated, however, in the vast interest inspired by the subjects brought before the

committee. That the world is in a conspiracy against pawnbrokers, and that the most cautious conduct and the most complete organisation are necessary, is obvious from this record. A member of the society applies for assistance and advice, under the trying circumstance of an owner demanding property stolen from him, and pledged. Advice promptly given, assistance refused. Solicitor to society unfeelingly remarks there can be no doubt that the pawnbroker must give up the property, if it is identified; committee concur in his opinion. Committee return a similar answer to an application from a member for the means of defence (already refused by "the district committee") in connection with some stolen and pledged silk; and justify their refusal by the remark that "no successful resistance can possibly be made." Discussion on a felonious and absconding pawnbroker's assistant; on a pawnbroker who stopped goods, offered under suspicious circumstances; on a case wherein property had been pledged by a wife, and redeemed by a husband (on a legal declaration that the ticket was lost): whereupon husband and wife adjourn to the Divorce Court, and wife's solicitor

produces ticket, and claims the pledged property on her behalf; upon "duffing" jewelry made specially to swindle the trade; and other kindred topics,—prove that the sweet little cherubs who sit in committee at Radley's Hotel keep watch over the life and interests of every poor Jack whose profession is pawnbroking, and who falls among thieves, or otherwise knows trouble. These cherubs must not be confounded with the "Assistant Pawnbrokers' Benevolent Society," which is much agitated on "Mr. Floodgate's case," and a report of whose meeting is on the next page.

Not without difficulty, for the particulars are given in former numbers of the *Gazette*, which we have not seen, do we make out that Mr. Floodgate is a pawnbroker's shopman, who is being prosecuted for an alleged breach of the law relating to the purchase of precious metals. The Assistants' Society has met to discuss the propriety of furnishing him with the means of defence, and though some of its members express a strong opinion that it is the duty of "a master to defend his young man," still a committee is appointed to collect subscriptions on Mr. Floodgate's behalf. The solicitor informs us that "a defence may be

conducted for twenty pounds; twenty-five pounds, thirty pounds, or, in fact, for *any amount*, according to the talent which might be retained," and hints that "to defend this case in a style commensurate with the prosecution, we may be put to an expense of eighty or even one hundred pounds."

We feel this to be a good round sum, but preferring it to the vague "any amount" previously mentioned, we separate, determined that our fellow-assistant shall be properly represented on the day of trial. That day of trial is now past; let us hope, therefore, that our efforts were not unavailing, and that Mr. Floodgate is (if wrongfully charged) at this moment making out duplicates, and rejoicing in the friendly protection afforded him by the society. Passing by the literature of the *Gazette*, we come to the advertising pages. Here we have more proof of the usefulness of the paper, by finding every conceivable pawnbroking want appealed to. We can have for one shilling, post-free, "A table of the rates of profits allowed to be taken by pawnbrokers on intermediate sums;" for five shillings, "A statistical account of the operations in the Monts de Piété of France, Belgium, and Ire-

land, and of pawnbroking in England, with suggestions for its improvement."

If we be of an antiquarian turn, a barrister-at-law has prepared for us *The Law of Pawns*: which is, not a work on chess, but a collection of adjudged cases, together with some historical account of the system of lending money on pawns, as practised by tradesmen, companies, and governments. Again, if we be a buyer, as well as a mortgagee, of miscellaneous property, three firms of auctioneers announce sales of unredeemed pledges on every day in the ensuing week. Pawnbroking businesses to be disposed of; pawnbroking tickets for the "sale trade," "boldly written, at from ninepence the gross;" pawnbroking duplicate tickets, of "a firmness and substance hitherto unsurpassed," numbered consecutively from one to ten thousand, no two tickets in the same month to bear a similar number, and no two tickets to be alike for two years; pawnbrokers' assistants who want places; and pawnbrokers who want assistants,—are all headings to the advertisements. Youths, sharp active youths, young men, respectable young men, men of experience, men of from six to seventeen years

experience in the taking of pledges, counter-men, salesmen innumerable, are open to engagements. The respectable young men mostly aspire to "a situation as third," whatever that may be; the youths are able to write tickets as well as serve at the counter; while the salesmen and men of experience can, as a rule, "mark for the window," and take the management in the absence of the principal.

Of the other journal we had indirectly heard. For in the *Newgate Calendar* are there not constant references to the Bow-Street Runners' organ, the *Hue and Cry*? The Bow-Street Runners are gone; it is years since we read the *Newgate Calendar*; and now we find that the *Hue and Cry* has given up that thrilling title, and calls itself the *Police Gazette*.

It is published by authority, and is of similar size and shape to the journal just described. It is, however, very different in style and tone, presenting neither leading-article, answers to correspondents, reports of public meetings, or advertisements proper. We say advertisements proper, because the whole paper is filled with advertisements of a kind, but they are inserted free of charge, and were

never liable to duty. The "wants," which occupy its columns, are wants of criminals still at large. The paper before us is thus subdivided: Four pages are taken up with "Informations," and four with the names of deserters from her Majesty's service. The "Informations" are subdivided into "Murder and Maliciously Wounding;" "Robbery and Larceny from the Person;" "Burglary and Housebreaking;" "Horse and Cattle Stealing;" "Larceny and Embezzlement;" "Frauds and Aggravated Misdemeanours;" "Miscellaneous;" "Property Stolen;" and "Property Found by Police Officers" (on the persons of prisoners and elsewhere). The style of this journal is of the closest, for it merely gives, as it professes, "*the substance* of all informations received in cases of felony, and of misdemeanours of an aggravated nature, and against receivers of stolen goods, reputed thieves and offenders escaped from custody, with the time, the place, and the circumstance of the offence. The names of persons charged with offences, who are known, but not in custody, and a description of those who are not known, their appearance, dress, and other marks of identity. The names of accomplices

and accessories, with every particular which may lead to their apprehension. A description, as accurate as possible, of property that has been stolen, and a minute description of stolen horses, for the purpose of tracing and recovering them." The facility of mental metempsychosis which made us a pawnbroker just now, converts us into a police-constable while reading this statement of the scope and bearing of the *Police Gazette*. We open it at our provincial station-house, and, conning over the descriptions to see whether any of them apply to the two suspicious-looking tramps we saw lurking about the manor-house yesterday when we were on duty, fail in this; but in one of the advertisements we recognise the plausible talkative man we met at the cross-roads on Sunday, who seemed, for all his talkativeness, to shun our eye, and whom we heard of afterwards as inquiring the way to the next town. We report our discovery, a message is sent to the police-superintendent of that town, and we have the satisfaction of knowing that the Blucher boots with a small hole in one toe will shortly carry their owner into Stamford jail. The extreme particularity of these descriptive "informations" is carried

down to scars on the thumb, to peculiar modes of pressing the lips when speaking, to the accent of the voice, and to the expression of the eye. The dress in which "wanted" persons were last seen, down to the patches on their trousers, the cut and material of their coats, the amount of wear had out of their hats and boots, the size of the plaits in their shirts, and the colour of their stockings, is faithfully reproduced; and we rise from the perusal of this portion of the news from Bow Street convinced that we shall soon hear of a large proportion of the one hundred and ten "informations" it contains resulting in the apprehension of the persons described. Subsequently we turn to the list of deserters, the reward for whose apprehension has since 1857 been twenty shillings, instead of ten. We carefully note the tabulated columns, headed respectively, name, number of regiment, corps, where born, trade, age, size, hair, eyes, face, coat, trousers, date of desertion, marks, and remarks. Upwards of a thousand deserters from the militia and line are here described; the sea-service, including the marines, does not furnish a fourth of that number.

Instructed and edified, we put aside our newly-discovered periodicals, with an inaudibly-expressed hope that our distinguished name may never figure in the columns of either.

CHAPTER XVII.

ON THE PUBLIC SERVICE.

So Earl Russell called it in my passport—travelling “on the public service,” nothing definite, nothing more. I had my instructions, of course, but they were, as they will remain, private. I had no uniform, like a courier, no sheepskin bag of documents, no despatch-box, nothing distinctive and immediately recognisable, like a Queen’s messenger. On the public service I was to travel as one of the public, quietly making such inquiries as had been suggested to me, and quietly noting down the replies; but I was in no wise to give clue to my business, was not to produce my passport until it was asked for, and was to enter into no particulars as to the public service on which I was accredited. I had one consolation—that I afforded subject for an enormous amount of jesting on the part of those friends who knew that my mission lay in Hamburg, at that time the head-quarters of

the German army marching on to Schleswig-Holstein. It was a part of the admirable humour of those wags to assume a belief in the premature closing of my earthly career, to take longing lingering farewells of me, under the assumption that I should be taken for a spy, and either shot on the spot, after a drum-head court-martial, or immured for life in a Prussian fortress. I was christened "Major André." I was begged to read an account of the captivity at Verdun. One would gravely affirm that he had heard hanging was not really painful; another would advise me not to submit to the degradation of a handkerchief over my eyes, but to glare defiantly at the shooting-party; a third hoped I had a strong pocket-knife, because "people always bought those queer little things that the prisoners carved out of wood." I bore their sallies like a hero, and started by the night-mail to Dover "on the public service."

Although the South-Eastern Railway has done its best to whirl me to that never-somnolent town, and although the Belgian mail-packet, advantaged by a splendid night, a favouring breeze, and a placid sea, has conveyed me thence to Ostend in very little more

than four hours, I find, on disembarking at half-past three A.M., that our haste has been in vain, for the train does not start until after seven, and I have nearly four hours to get through. I am not prepared to say at what town in Europe I should prefer spending these four hours on a winter's night, but I am prepared to declare that certainly Ostend should not have my suffrages. Had it been summer, I could have had some supper at one of the numerous quay-side restaurants, and then strolled round the town; or I could have walked on the Digue, or examined the Phare, or bathed in the sea; but in January the quay-side restaurants are shut, and none of the other diversions are tempting. Nothing suggests itself but bed; so, mindful of old recollections, I determine to go to the Hôtel d'Allemagne, and, waving off touters, who, even at this dead hour of the night and season of the year, are vociferously to the fore, I stow myself into a one-horse omnibus, and mention my intended destination. The conductor of this omnibus suggests to me a reconsideration of my determination. That he should say any thing against the Hôtel d'Allemagne, far be it! But he knows a better; one which, if he may use

an English word, is bien confortablement, one which is close at hand, and where mademoiselle (the other occupant of the omnibus) is about to descend. Will I not? No, I won't! the Hôtel d'Allemagne or nothing; and I pity mademoiselle, who descends at a not very attractive-looking porte-cochère, as I think of Raymond and Agnes, and Mr. Wilkie Collins's terribly strange bed, and many other unpleasant nights. But arriving at the Hôtel d'Allemagne, we find it fast closed, and all ringing and shouting are powerless to wake the inhabitants; so, much humiliated and crest-fallen, I give in, and allow myself to be reconveyed to the bien confortablement.

It is warm at the bien confortablement, which is a great point on a bitter night; the stove is alight, the moderator-lamp shines brightly on the snowy tablecloth, and mademoiselle, who was deposited by the omnibus on its first journey, and who turns out to be a "young person in service," is talking un-aspirated English to a big man, who came over in the fore-part of the steamer, and who is drinking hot brandy-and-water at a great rate. My hoarse friend, who has given up the omnibus, here puts in a spectral appearance at

the door, and beseeches me to go to bed, promising to call me in the morning; so, dazed and tired, to bed I go; and as I creep between the coarse sheets, and rebound on the spring mattress, and see the foreign furniture, and smell the foreign smell, and vainly endeavour to cover myself with the foreign bed-clothes, I bethink me of the time when I was a tall slip of a boy, eighteen years ago, and when, on my way to a German university, I passed my first night in foreign parts in this same city of Ostend. And so, lulled partly by these reflections, partly by the monotonous crooning of the voices of the young person in service and the brandy-drinker in the next room, I fell asleep.

“'Sieu! 'sieu! cinq heures et d'mi, m'sieu.” That recalled me to my senses, and I damped myself with the napkin, and placed as much of my nose and chin as it would contain into the pie-dish, and dressed myself, and arrived in the salon just as the breakfast I had ordered before I went to bed was brought in by the waiter.

Princes, fools, and Englishmen, travel in the first-class carriages, says the German proverb: I know I am not a prince, but I am an Englishman, therefore one need not enter upon

the other question, I think, as I take my first-class ticket. I am travelling "on the public service" now, so I ride in the first-class; on previous occasions I have ridden in the fourth-class, with fishwomen carrying strong-smelling baskets of Ostend produce into the inland regions, and blue-bloused peasants in large-peaked caps, with all of whom I have held converse in the Flemish language—which I did not understand, but in which I made excellent progress by speaking a mixture of English and German with a Dutch accent. Now I sit in the first-class. I am certain there are no other Englishmen in the train, and I suppose there are no princes, and no fools, at such an early hour, for I am solitary and silent. On, past Jabbeke and Bloemendael, jolly little neighbouring villages; on, through the flat well-cultivated Belgian country; on, past those dreary old châteaux, with the gabled roofs, standing far back, and looking so grim and desolate; on, past the white-faced little towns, through the high street of which our train tears, giving us passing glimpses of close-capped children screaming at the wooden bar which prevents them from hurling themselves on the line; on, until with a whistle and a

shriek, we dash into Ghent, and pull up steaming beside the platform. Only one change at the Ghent station—no Englishman; no bundle of railway rugs, umbrella and sticks, waterproof coat, camp-stool, and red-faced Murray, shining like a star in the midst of them; no bowing commissionnaire conducting milor to his carriage; priests in big shovel-hats; fat-faced Flemish maidens; Ghent burghers, looking particularly unlike one's idea of Philip van Artevelde; porters, idlers, every thing as usual, except the English travellers. So at Malines, where, as usual, we stop for half an hour's refreshment, I perceive the lack of English travellers; the buvette, where assemble the choice spirits of the third and fourth classes, is filled with roysterers drinking that mahogany-coloured beer with a white woolly froth, which is at once so nasty and so reminiscent of a pantomime beverage; but the first-class restaurant (so red-velvety, so gilded and looking-glassed, and artificial-flowered, and marble-tabled) has only three visitors; a Belgian officer in a gray overcoat, bright blue trousers and gilt spurs: a fat German, perpetually wetting the point of the pencil with which he is making notes: and myself. So throughout the journey.

Passing Liège, the sun burst out, and the deep red cuttings, and the foaming waterfalls, and babbling rivulets, and bright green growth of what Thomas Hood aptly called the "lovely environs" of that grim smoke-begrimed city, glowed in his rays. Indeed, the weather continued so bright and genial, that when we ran into Cologne, at half-past four, I could scarcely believe it was mid-winter. But when I stood, portmanteau in hand, at the railway-station, I soon realised the fact! In the touring season the yard is filled with cabs and omnibuses; now, there are three wretched droschkies, driverless and badly horsed; then, you have to fight your way through a shrieking crowd of touters, eager to bear you off to see the Dom, the shrine of the three kings, and the bones of St. Ursula's twelve thousand virgins; now, a solitary man, hinting at no sight to be seen, offers to carry my baggage to an inn. But I leave my traps at the station, and having two hours to pass before the starting of the train, I walk through the town, and find it indeed deserted. The big Rhine-bordering hotels are closed, half the Jean Marie Farinas have shut up their Eau-de-Cologne shops, while the other two hundred and fifty seem

thoroughly unexpectant of custom: the Wechsel Comptoir (or money-changers), whose ideas as to the current value of a sovereign are very vacillating, now have closed their shutters, and the itinerant photograph-sellers have fled. So I skulk back to the station, and there get a portion of a tough hare, and some red cabbage, and some kraut and potato salad, drink a bottle of Rüdesheimer, and throw myself into the train and prepare for a night's rest.

I get it, with the exception of three rapid exits for refreshment purposes, at Minden, Hanover, and Lehrte. I sleep steadily on until half-past seven A.M., when we arrive at Harburg, our terminal station. Hamburg lies on the other side of the Elbe, and the passage of the river is made in summer by a steam-boat; but now the Elbe is frozen, and the crossing is long and difficult. As I am getting my portmanteau, I see a good-looking fresh-coloured boy in a huge fur cap, standing on the box of a droschky in the courtyard; he motions to me inquiringly; I respond, and next minute he has rushed up, has collared my portmanteau, has pushed me into his carriage, and is standing upon the box, whooshing and holloaing to his two met-

blesome little steeds. Besides his fur cap, he wears a short sheepskin jacket with the collar turned up round his face, thick breeches, and well-greased boots reaching to his knees. He has a large pair of fur gloves too, and a long whip, and a short cigar, and a great flow of animal spirits, which impels him jocosely to lay the whip across every body he meets: shivering peasants with yokes carrying red pails, solemn douaniers, pompous post-couriers, sturdy farmers, fat burghers, all with their heads buried in their coat-collars. In five minutes we arrive at the banks of the Elbe, where we have to wait a quarter of an hour until the steam-ferry is ready to receive us. The scene is desolate enough; the ice has begun to break up, but as yet has "given" but little; a bitter north-east wind skins the thin bald dreary landscape, flat and treeless; and the horses attached to the various carriages shiver and rattle their harness. The peasants have put off their yokes, and stamp up and down beside their red pails; the douaniers scowl over their pipes through the windows of the little toll-house; the post-courier slips on the frozen road and falls headlong, coming up again with a comic expression of ruffled dignity and a mouth

full of strange oaths; and nobody seems happy save my fur-capped droschky boy, who, by dodging and whipping, has edged his carriage into the foremost rank. Then a shout announces that the steam-ferry is ready, and with heavy jolts and bumps we rumble on to it, carriages, horsemen, peasants, all closely packed together, with some twenty men in the bows armed with long iron-tipped poles to break up the solid, and push off the floating, ice. Steam is up, the fat little funnel throws out angry snorts, and we are off; but after two minutes come upon a solid mass of ice which defies our charge, and defies, too, all the prods of the pole-bearers: so we have to back and steer into another channel, through which, by dint of pushing off the floating icebergs, and after many weary stoppages, we arrive at the other side. Then down a long, long chaussée, with never-ending poplars on either side, bounded by a broad arm of the Elbe, so thoroughly frozen that we drive bodily over the ice, with no other difficulty than the uncertain foot-hold of the horses; then another chaussée, straggling outskirts of a town, wooden bridges over canals, where broad-bottomed boats lay, like the larks and

leverets in the pie immortalised by Tennyson, "embedded and enjellied;" then through a handsome faubourg, along a broad road skirting an enormous sheet of water and bordered by handsome houses; and then pulled short up by the door of Streit's hotel.

Very good is Streit, very handsome is his house, and very excellent is his accommodation, although by reason of my becoming tenant of the only disengaged room in the hotel, I am mounted up very high, and my chamber has a dreary look-out into a back court-yard or flowerless garden. For Streit is full. At Streit's door I noticed two sentinels on guard, and in Streit's first floor are reposing princes of the land, who are thus guarded, and noble officers, the princes' staff. His Royal Highness of Prussia is chez Streit, and smaller Transparencies are billeted about in other mansions of this noble street, which is called the Jungfernstieg. A very short acquaintance with Streit proves to me that his visitors are principally military; lumbering men with clinking spurs, and huge overcoats, and sweeping moustaches, brush by me in the passages; and I am continually tumbling over the regular soldier-servant, he of the short hair, stiff

gait, and ears sticking out on the side of his head like the handles of a jug. I am disposed to believe that Streit imagines I too am military, when he hands me a letter from high authority which has been waiting my arrival, and which bears an enormous seal with the impression of the town arms, and has a strictly official and somewhat military appearance. Streit, I think, recognises the style of the address, but little wots Streit of the contents of this document, which enjoins me to return to England so soon as my necessary rest is accomplished. In his happy ignorance, and doubtless thinking that he has me his customer for days, Streit suggests my being tired and going to bed. But—though I don't confide this to Streit—I have only one day in which to see Hamburg, so I scorn his suggestion, and order breakfast. After a splendid bath—Streit has a very good bath in his house—I descend, find an oasis of cups and plates in a desert of tablecloth (laid for the table d'hôte breakfast), and start out to explore.

The enormous lake in front of me is the Alster Bassin, and no doubt in summer, when it is the grand resort of the Hamburgers, who, making up pleasant parties, float over its waters

in painted boats, or booze and smoke in pavilion cafés on its banks, it is a delightful place. Now, however, it is one vast sheet of ice, on which the thaw is just beginning to take effect, for in the distance is seen a line of men, half a dozen paces apart, extending from shore to shore, busily engaged in breaking holes in the ice to admit the air, and so tend to its more speedy dissolution. In the comely gardens fringing the lake; I find nurse-girls and their charges, of course attendant soldiers, old gentlemen evidently bent on "constitutionals," priests with bent heads hurrying to the service, the bells inviting to which are now resonant, and little children scampering about—not unlike a foreign edition of St. James's Park, barring the ducks. Between the two Alster Bassins, the greater and the less, I cross over a barren strip of land, where there is a lock and a big windmill, brown and skeletony, and reminding one of the background of a sketch by Ostade; and on the other side I find a high road, and on the high road I find two horses, and on the horses I find two Austrian officers coming very much to grief, partly on account of the slippery state of the roads, and partly on account of their

not having yet acquired the rudiments of equitation; for I take it that to pull a horse's nose on a level with his eye by the aid of a very sharp curb, and then to kick him in the flank with sharp-rowelled spurs, clutching meanwhile by any thing permanent, is not the best way to keep a horse on his legs. Then across the Jungfernstieg into the shop-streets, where there is plate-glass, and gilding, and decoration, and lavish expenditure on every side. To eat seems the great end of the Hamburger's life—to eat and so to enjoy. Not only are there large hotels, restaurants, conditorei or pastrycooks, and fruiterers in every street, but at every dozen doors you find a board announcing that in the basement, below the level of the pavement, is an oyster-cellar. *Austern und Frühstück*, Oysters and Breakfast, that is the hospitable announcement of the signboard, and there do the fast young merchants congregate before they arrive at their counting-houses, and plunge so deeply into the many-lined, thinly-written, thin rustling leaves of letter-paper, all relating to that “first of exchange.” These oyster-cellars are cool yet snug resorts, suggestive of pleasant and soothing alkaline waters, succulent

bivalves, appetising anchovies and devilled biscuits; for your Hamburger has any thing but poor brains for drinking, and could give your swag-bellied Hollander, and the rest of Cassio's friends, a long start and catch him easily. Likewise, as a new feature, do I notice at the doors of the restaurants, venison: not in its prepared and floured state—as with us—but in its natural state, skin on, horns, hoofs, severed jugular and all.

High change in Hamburg is at one o'clock. As it is rapidly approaching that hour, I make my way towards the Börse, and enter the building as it is beginning to fill. A handsome edifice this, with a large spiral hall in the centre, surrounded by a colonnade. Up-stairs all sorts of little rooms, with names on the doors, merchants' offices like our London pattern at Lloyd's, and a big room, empty and locked, which I am told is the seat of the Chamber of Commerce. From below comes a roar of voices, and, looking down, I see the Hamburg merchants literally "at it." There they are, Hamburgers proper, rotund of body, heavy of jowl, fishy of eye, stubbly of hair, bushy of beard, thumb-beringed and hands-begrimed, listening and grunting; young Hamburg, blotchy, sod-

den, watery-eyed, strongly reminiscent of "last night," stung into business for business' sake, and for the sake of making more money for the encouragement of Veuve Cliquot, and Mumm, and Roederer, and Heidzecker, and other compounders of Sillery Sec and Pommerey Greno; old Jewry, gabardined to the heels in fur, with cotton wool in its ears, screaming, yelling, checking off numbers in its interlocutor's face with skinny yellow fingers; young Jewry, with an avalanche of black satin round its throat, and a big brilliant diamond therein, cool, calm, specious, and a trifle oleaginous; middle-aged France, heaving in the waistband which props its rotund stomach under its double-chin, with scarcely any face to be seen between the rim of its fore and aft hat and the points of its gummed moustache; here and there an Englishman, chimney-pot-hatted, solemn and awfully respectable; little olive-skinned Greeks, Russians in sable, and two Parsees in brown-paper head-dresses. But the noise! It floods you, drenches you, soaks you through and through.

When I leave the Exchange it is past two o'clock, which I am glad of; but it is beginning to rain, which I am sorry for; Streit's

table-d'hôte does not take place until four, and I must fain walk about, dreading the thoughts of my dreary bedroom looking on the back yard. So I walk about, and look at the church of St. Nicholas, which is one of the best Gothic triumphs of our own great architect, Mr. Gilbert Scott, and I bend my neck very far back indeed endeavouring to see the spire of St. Michael's; and I visit the Rathhaus and am not impressed thereby, and I inspect the promenading female beauty with the same result: for the Hamburg females are neither better nor worse looking than the majority of their German sisters, and have the coarse hair, and the dull thick skins, and the coarse hands, and the elephantine ankles, for which your Deutsches Mädchen is renowned. They seem to find favour though in the eyes of the Prussian and Austrian officers, who are every where, and who ogle them in the true military manner; but the maidens do not respond, and only halt in their walk to contemplate occasional regiments marching by, with the invariable accompaniment of vagabond boys and men. But the rain now comes down so smartly that I can walk about uncovered no longer, and am making my way to Streit's,

when out of the Jungfernstieg I turn into an arcade, full of such shops as in such places are generally to be found, and here I while away my time. Jewellers first: I do not care to stare in at jewellers' windows in England; I seem to myself like a hungry urchin at a pastrycook's longing after the tarts; but that rule does not hold here, and so I stare my fill, noticing all the curly snakes with ruby eyes and turquoise tails, the rings and pins, the hair-brooches (the Germans are tremendous at these, and there were shoals of those very gummy wavy hair willow-trees bent over little black tombs, with the gilt wire adjustment plainly visible), the thin little French watches, the fat German turnips, the montres Chinoises (Chinese watches made in Geneva) with one long thin hand perpetually turning round, and rendering hopeless any attempt to tell the time; the earrings, the enormous gold skewers, arrows, hoops, arcs, shells and knobs for the hair. Printsellers: the place of honour occupied by the late Mr. Luard's pictures of "Nearing Home" and the "Welcome Arrival," and Mr. Brooks's pretty sentimentalisms of empty cradles and watching wives; close by these, and in excellent keeping, a French artist's no-

tion of the English in Paris; English gentleman in a suit of whity-brown paper, green plaid cloth tops to his boots, a pointed moustache, and a very fluffy hat (how they *do* catch our peculiarities in dress, don't they?), saying to a lady, lovely, but perhaps a trifle free: "Voulez accepter le cœur de *moa*?" in itself an excellent joke; many pictures of encounters between the Prussians and the Danes in 1848, in which the latter are always getting the worst of it, and a notable print, "Seeschlacht bei Eckenford" (Sea-fight at Eckenford), which sea-fight apparently consists of a Danish ship running aground, and the Germans running away. Then, a bookseller's; covered all over with their little copies of *Der Londoner Vertrag* ("The London Treaty" of 1852), with numerous French and German books, and some gaudy-coloured English works, one of which I am inclined to think by its title, *Daddy Goriot, or Unrequited Affection*, cannot be entirely original, but may have some connection with a French gentleman, one Honoré de Balzac, deceased. Then a photographer's; where I am refreshed at finding what I, of course, have never seen in my own land —carte de visite portraits of the Prince and

Princess of Wales, also of Herr von Bismark, the great Prussian firebrand, also of Fräulein Delia and Fräulein Lucca, great operatic stars, in all kinds of costume; also the portrait of a gentleman, with parti-coloured cheeks, a cock's-comb head-dress and fantastic dress, with a legend underneath, stating it to be the effigy of "Herr Price, Clown, Circus Renz."

A lengthened tour of inspection of this arcade, and a chat with the tobacconist, of whom I buy some cigars, brings me close to four o'clock, when Streit rings his bell for table-d'hôte, and I find myself one of half-a-dozen civilians, all the rest of the guests being Austrian and Prussian officers. When they find I am a foreigner (they think I am a Russian), these gentlemen are very polite, including me in their conversation, clinking glasses with me, &c., while they scowl upon the civilians of their own country, and take no notice of them. The conversation turns upon the part played by England in this war, and I have the satisfaction of hearing my country and its ministers very roundly abused: so roundly, that at length I declare my nationality, and receive all sorts of apologies from my friends, who deprecate any idea of person-

ality, but who still decry our English policy, and who tell me that the unpopularity of England throughout Germany is terrible. In due course after which I take my candle and go to bed, having to be up at daybreak, to start once more on the public service.

CHAPTER XVIII.

ASSAULT AND BATTERY.

“HA! ha!” said he, with a sardonic laugh.

“What do you mean?” I asked, indignantly.

“Ha! ha!” repeated he, more sardonically than before; “it’s a hoax;” and then he roared with delight. “He” was the booking-clerk at the Faversham railway-station; “I” was a passenger just alighted, and inquiring whether there would be any special return trains to London; and “it” was a paragraph about a night-attack by volunteers, which had appeared in the newspapers.

Now, though a hoax in itself is a most delightful thing, requiring great subtlety of wit to invent, and great delicacy of humour to carry through, still when, after travelling more than fifty miles, at great trouble and inconvenience, for a special object, you find you have mistaken an asinine bray for the genuine bugle-call, you are apt to be annoyed. So I was beginning to wax very wroth, and

to feel any thing but pleasantly disposed towards Faversham, its volunteers, local population, railway, and belongings in general, when I was accosted by the station-master, from whom I learned that, though the numbers engaged would not be so large as had been stated in the newspaper paragraph, the night-attack would certainly be made; that from the condition and drill of the men the operation would probably be very creditably carried out; and that, though there were no special return trains to London—indeed, I seemed to be the only stranger in the place—there was a capital hotel, where I should be taken excellent care of.

I found the hotel, forming one side of the queer little market-square, and immediately confronting the lopsided little town-hall, with its big-faced clock and its supporting pillars forming a little arcade, in which, probably, the merchants of Faversham most do congregate. I found the landlord astonished at the idea of a stranger coming so far to see so little, but, undoubtedly, delighted at the chance of driving me in an open trap to the scene of action, and of beholding the military display. I ordered my dinner, and I set out to do

Faversham. Easily done. Such quaint, old-fashioned, gable-ended houses, with all their woodwork newly grained, with plate-glass substituted for the old diamond panes, with the date of erection, in many cases, neatly picked out as something to be proud of; and with a perpetual current of business pouring into them, bespeaking trade and prosperity; such clean broad trimly-kept streets, stretching here away into a pleasant country, there away to new red-brick buildings, suggestive of benevolent townsfolk and heavy legacies; such a charming old church, with a singular spire springing from a curious arch; such a picturesque schoolhouse close by, with such a ringing, fresh, girlish voice within, heard through the open window singing—oh, so sweetly!—the Evening Hymn; such a capital range of red-brick houses, with stone mullions and copings judiciously introduced, with bay windows thrown out here, and twisted chimneys put on there, and with, in the middle, a large handsome evidently public building, with big doors and those fine old mediæval hinges, which make such a show, but which are not particularly useful. Of a passing rustic, or rather semi-rustic, an agri-

cultural labourer with a maritime flavour, I asked what that (pointing to it) was. The person looked at me for a moment seriously, then grinned, and said, "Faversham." "Of course, I know; but *that*," pointing again. A longer stare; then "Houses," was the reply. "Of course; but *that*," with an unmistakable forefinger. "A-ah!"—long drawn-out sigh of relief—"Institoot." The Albert Institute, well endowed, well supported, well attended, well conducted. Faversham's tribute to the memory of the Prince Consort, and a very sensible tribute too.

Dinner despatched, I found the landlord awaiting me in an open phaeton, and away we sped to the scene of the operations, some four miles distant. Our passage through the streets was impeded by the streams of people all pouring out in the one direction, old and young, women and children, all full of spirits. Sitting on the box by the landlord, I had been wondering at the perpetual shouts of laughter we occasioned, at the never-failing roar of delight with which our appearance—like that of some popular actor—was greeted, and I was about to ask my companion for an explanation, when, turning round for an in-

stant, I saw a shock-headed ragged man solemnly trotting by the side of our trap, to which he was holding with one hand. "Who's your friend?" I asked the landlord. "Oh!" said he, without turning, "'tis only Buzzy Billy!" Being to my shame ignorant of this celebrity, I was compelled to press the question further, and then learned that Buzzy Billy was the "softy," the omadhaun, in plain English the idiot, of the town, who, like most idiots, had a certain amount of nous, which fitted him for work which no one else cared to do, and that he was attached as our retainer to hold the horse and look after the trap while we were further afield, with the certainty that no amount of excitement could beguile him from his duty. Which result, on such an occasion, could not have been predicated of any other male in Faversham. As running footman Buzzy Billy discharged his duties well, distributing slaps of the head among the boys with great impartiality, with a hand about the size and colour of a shoulder of mutton, invariably meeting all suggestions of a "lift" with the sarcastic remark, "Get 'long wi' 'ee! They wouldn't let *me* ride, much less such as you!"

As we rode along, I learned from the landlord that the night's proceedings had been originated by a gentleman, the proprietor of extensive powder-mills in the neighbourhood, who, at his own cost, had raised among his own workmen two batteries of artillery, numbering one hundred and twenty men, who are provided by him with uniform and accoutrements, whose expenses are paid, and from whose wages he never makes any deduction when drills, gun-practice, and military evolutions call them from their regular work. These artillerymen, constituting the Second Kent Artillery Volunteers, were reckoned among the crack corps of the county; and of this I had an opportunity presently of judging, as we drove past the grounds of their founder, who is also their major, where they were drawn up in line—as well-built, trim, well-equipped a body of men as one could wish to see. These were the repelling force; the attacking body, consisting of the Sheerness Dockyard Battalion, had preceded us, and we could occasionally catch the refrain of a tune played by their band far ahead. By this time a bright clear moon had risen, the air was fresh and frosty, and the ground firm

and in capital marching condition; the road was filled with pedestrians, all chatting and laughing, with here and there a stray horseman, or a chaise-cart, or a van laden with company. If there had been sunlight and dust, and hundreds more vehicles, it would have looked rather like the road to the Derby; as it was, it dimly resembled the outskirts of a country fair. At last we began to approach our destination; the horse and chaise were left in Buzzy Billy's charge; and we proceeded on foot across a marshy piece of ground to a big barn, the battery about to be assaulted. A little inspection showed that this big barn was surrounded by a ditch, that it had heavy earth-works, and that through the embrasures loomed suspiciously the muzzles of two twenty-four-pounder guns. Its occupants had not yet arrived, so we followed the fortunes of the enemy, and pursued our way across the marsh-ground until we came to Ore Creek, in which lay the three little ship-launch gunboats under cover of whose fire the attack was to be made. The scene was a strange one; to the left, aground like a stranded whale, stood the hull of a brig, now used as the coast-guard station, and tenanted by

the chief boatman, who, with his family and friends, was calmly standing in the bows and watching the operations. From the shore, gun detachments, all plainly visible in the moonlight, were embarking to board the gunboats under the lee of the coast-guard ship; the commander of the attacking force was silently mustering his men, dealing out to them their ammunition, and giving them their final instructions. A knot of the local population, principally boys and women (the majority were up at the battery), stood by in excitement which bordered very closely on trepidation; far out to the left one could perceive the track of the little river Swale, and the twinkling lights of the Isle of Sheppey; while the horizon on the left was cut by the black spars of a collier brig, curiously suggestive of yard-arm execution, and of immediate readiness for the reception of those smugglers who once abounded in these parts, and of whose exploits Thomas Ingoldsby has been the pleasantest narrator.

While the gun detachments were silently stealing towards the gunboats, which, mastless, black, immobile, lay like three porpoises floating side by side in the creek, the attack-

ing force, having been properly rested, were divided into two parties: one to advance against the battery in front, the other to harass it in flank. All seemed to promise well for the onslaught; when, far away in the direction of the battery, was seen a flash, followed by a tremendous roar, which woke all the echoes of the neighbourhood; the invaded were on the look-out, and had commenced the action. Forthwith the gunboats came to the support of their men, and one after another the little six-pounders blazed away with an unintermittent fury which spoke admirably for the manner in which they were served. Under their cover the two portions of the attacking force advanced, firing volleys upon the supports of the defenders, who were promptly called out. So admirably was all this done, that it gave one (I should think) a very fair notion of real warfare; the roar of the guns and the rattle of the small-arms were incessant; through the thick clouds of smoke which rolled over the marshes came hoarse words of command, all ending in that peculiar bellow which ought to convey a great deal to the soldier, as it is utterly unintelligible to the civilian. Happily there were no groans

of the wounded, the substitute being the faint shrieks and Lar'-bless-me's of the female portion of the spectators. At first the attacking party carried all before it, and when it arrived at the battery beat off the supports, swarmed into the ditch through the embrasures, and up into the battery itself, to find the enemy retreated and the guns spiked. But, having learned from a prescient bystander that it was not at all unlikely a reverse would take place, I made my way by a *détour* to the top of a hill, where I passed the retreated Kent Artillery Volunteers comfortably ensconced behind a masked battery, hidden, like Tennyson's "Talking Oak," "to the knees in fern," and awaiting the advent of the invaders, who by this time had left the captured battery and were pursuing their successful career.

These devoted youths advanced until they were very unpleasantly near the covered muzzles of the guns, when they were received with a salvo which, had the guns been shotted, certainly would have finished the attacking force. They wavered, halted, and then at word of command executed a strategic movement of retreat; which, in plain English, looked very like running away. Then the in-

vaded ran after them; then the invaded's supports fired after them; then the retreating attackers faced about and fired on the advancing repellers; then the gunboats began to boom again, the battery guns began to blaze away at the gunboats, and the people who were running away ran away a little, turned round and fired, and the people who were running after them ran forward a little and fired; and so on, with a perpetual roaring and shouting, and running, until the attackers had been beaten off, and were supposed to have retired to their gunboats, and to be in full sail down Ore Creek.

Now did the local population, finding they were neither hanged nor shot nor blown up, as most of them expected, overcome the trepidation under which during the attack they had laboured, and shout great shouts and roars of joy (such as Kentish lungs can alone give vent to), and of applause to both parties engaged. Now did the invaders return from the creek, and prove by their actual presence that they had not sailed away; and now did they and the repellers, both somewhat grimy and sulphurous-smelling, fraternise and march back in amity to Faversham; where, in the assem-

bly-rooms, at the expense of the generous major, was set forth a great repast of beef and bread and beer, which was freely and immediately pitched into by all present; and then there was as much interchange of opinions on the night's work, of homely jokes and pleasant banterings, as full mouths and sharp appetites would permit. Now did I return to the coffee-room of the hotel, and finish my night's adventure with a glass of grog, and a chat with such a specimen of the cheery, honest, quaint old English naval officer as it had never been my good luck to meet before, and as I had hitherto believed was only to be found in the nautical novels of Captain Marryat.

The night-attack at Faversham was a good thing, well conceived, ably planned, well carried out. All drill and no amusement makes Jack (or any body else) a dull volunteer. To read, we must learn to spell; but to be always at spelling, even in words of four syllables, would be a dreary task. The formation of fours, the marching in sections and subdivisions, the manual and platoon, the judging-distance drill, &c., are all admirable initiatory exercises; but to keep interest alive in the men, to throw something like a fascination

round the pursuit, you must give them something more than this. This something more is to be found in periodical reviews, in out-camping, in sham-fights, in such a special manœuvre as is here recorded. All that was done at Faversham was on a miniature scale, but the well-arranged programme was kept to the letter, and was carried out with signal success. May it be the prelude to larger operations of like kind!

CHAPTER XIX.

SILENT HIGHWAYMEN.

It does not require one to be much of a philosopher broadly to define that we have our partialities as well as our dislikes, and that we are generally as irrational in one as the other. As the wildest of madmen will talk with perfect sense and fluency until asked what has become of Julius Cæsar, or what soft-soap is made of, when he will suddenly break out into rabid fury and incoherent bellowings, so can I listen with placid smiles to the narrated idiosyncrasies of my friends, meeting each account with placid smile or acquiescent shrug; but if by ill-chance the subject of the silent highway be touched upon offensively, I break forth and lose my head at once. The Thames is my mania, my love for it the absorbing passion of my life. It is the only one weapon with which I beat my provincial acquaintances and foreign visitors. They come and stay with me, and

abuse my place of abode. The provincial says he cannot breathe, the Frenchman says he has the spleen, the German inflates his many-plaited shirt-front, and bellows "Ach Gott! was für eine Luft!" and the Italian sighs heavily, and pantomimically searches for the sun. When I show them St. Paul's, they shrug, muttering of Notre-Dame, of the Cologne Dom, of St. Peter's at Rome, of Il Duomo at Milan; when I take them through Trafalgar Square they roar, immediately instituting comparisons between that monstrous national disgrace and the glorious Place de la Concorde of Paris, the Unter den Linden, or the Schloss Platz of Berlin, the St. Stephen's Platz of Vienna, the Piazza di San Pietro at Rome, the Piazza del Granduca at Florence, or the Piazza S. Marco at Venice. The Monument is a standing joke for them, and all the London statues are exquisite themes for ribaldry. They sneer at our theatres, they laugh at our church-architecture, they are impressed with nothing at all, except it be Madame Tussaud's waxwork, until I take them on the Thames. Then I hold them!

Dirty is Father Thames, I grant; thick, yellow, turbid, occasionally evil-smelling; but

I love him none the less. I know him where he is pure and cleanly, at near-lying Richmond and lock-bound Teddington; at decorous Hampton, and quaint old-fashioned Sunbury and Chertsey; by pretty Maidenhead and quaker Staines; at Pangbourne, Goring, and Streightly, than which three there are not, I opine, any lovelier spots in this lovely country; at monastic Medmenham and red-faced Henley, far away down to the spot where the banks echo with the time-kept strokes of the racing eight, and the river runs merrily past old Oxford town. I know him throughout; but I love him best in his own special territory, frowned upon by the great, gaunt, black warehouses, the dreary river-side public-houses, the huge brewery palaces, the shot-towers, the dock-houses, the dim gray Tower of London, the congregationless City churches, the clanging factories, the quiet Temple, the plate-glass works, the export Scotch and Irish merchants, the cheese-factors' premises, the cement-wharves, the sugar consignees' counting-houses, the slimy slippery landing-places, the atmosphere of which is here sticky with molasses, there dusty with flour, and a little way further off choky with particles of floating

wool. Make your embankments, if you like; lay down your level road duly granited and palisaded off from the river, and lined with buildings of equal height and of the same monotonous architecture; but, before you do that, you will have to clear away hundreds of little poky dirty streets of a peculiar speciality nowhere else to be met with—streets which are as thoroughly maritime as Hamilton Moore's Treatise on Navigation, or the bottom of a corvette that has been for three years on the West-India station—streets filled with outfitters, sail-makers, ship-chandlers; bakers of ship-biscuit, makers of ship-chronometers, sextants, and quadrants; sellers of slop guernseys, and pea-jackets, and sou'-westers; lenders of money on seamen's advance-notes; buyers of parrots and cockatoos, thin Trichinopoly cheroots, guava jelly, and Angostura bitters from home-returning Jack.

Look at my Thames, Historicus! and you will have little difficulty in calling before your mind's eye the old days when she was the Silent Highway for all, from the monarch taking water at Westminster, to the prisoner floating in at Traitor's Gate; when Richard the Second, floated in his tapestried barge,

and seeing Gower the poet, called him on board, and bade him "make a book after his best," whence arose the *Confessio Amantis*; when Wolsey, giving up York Place, "took his barge at his privy stairs, and so went by water to Putney;" when Sir Thomas More, abandoning his chancellorship and his state, gave up his barge and his eight watermen to Sir Thomas Audley, his successor; when James the Second, flying from his throne, embarked at Whitehall, as old Evelyn records in his Diary: "I saw him take barge—a sad sight." Time after time the oars cleave the waters, the swift wherries hurry towards the water postern of the Tower, the warder stands erect in the bows flouting the thick darkness with his flaming torch, the bearded guards lean negligently on their halberds, and in the midst sit the prisoners; now, courtly Essex, or grave-faced Raleigh; now, Northumberland, or vacillating Dudley, or gentle Lady Jane Grey. The Traitor's Gate opens, and the Constable of the Tower receives them at the stairs; then the hurried trial, the sentence, and the early morning when the black-visored headsman does his work.

As in a dissolving view, gone is the grim

old Traitor's Gate ; and in its place rises a rotunda with a Doric portico, an arcade, and a gallery outside, a Venetian pavilion in the centre of a lake, and grounds planted with trees and allées verts. This is Ranelagh, and the Silent Highway is silent no longer, bearing the chattering company thither on its bosom. "The prince, princess, duke, much nobility, and much mob besides are there." My Lord Chesterfield is so fond of it, that he has ordered all his letters to be directed thither. Dr. Arne composes the music for a concert ; fireworks and a mimic Etna are introduced. A mask taps Sir Roger de Coverley on the shoulder, and begs to drink a bottle of mead with him ; and Dr. Johnson—surly Sam himself—delivers that "*the coup-d'œil* is the finest thing he has ever seen." The Silent Highway itself is broad, and clear, and wholesome, covered by gay wherries manned by jolly young watermen, all of whom are "first oars" with those fine City ladies who go to Ranelagh and Vauxhall, and all of whom row so neat and scull so steadily (albeit thinking of nothing at all), that the maidens all flock to their boats, and they are never in want of a fare.

But the prompter's bell sounds, and through the Venetian pavilion, already half faded, I see the outline of Hungerford pier, with the ticket-sellers' boxes and the advertisement hoarding; in place of the trees and the allées verts are the black or chequered funnels of steamers, mincing conversation of beaux and belles is drowned in a roar of "Grinnidge, Woollidge—this way for Nine Ellums!" The rapidly-decomposing heads and dresses of the jolly young watermen dwindle down into the small whole-length of a wiry boy, who, with his eye on the captain's pantomimic finger, shrieks out with preternatural shrillness, "Turn a' starn!"

Yes! this is what it has all come to! The ancient Britons and their coracles, the middle ages and their romance of black boats and halberdiers and prisoners, and torches and Traitor's Gate, the Queen-Anne times of hoops and powder, periwigs and cocked-hats, rapiers and Ranelagh, all come down to a pea-soup atmosphere, a tidal sewer edged with bone-boiling and tallow-melting premises, and lashed into dull yellow foam by the revolving paddles of the iron steam-boats of the Waterman and Citizen Companies, plying every three minutes. The jolly young waterman, who used to row

along thinking of nothing at all, is now compelled to think a good deal of the management of his craft, lest she should come in contact with others, or with bridge-piers, and be incontinently sunk. Enormous barges, so helpless and unwieldy that one doubts the possibility of their ever being got home, still cumber Thames's broad bosom; light skiffs dot the surface from Putney to Twickenham; pretty yachts dodge about the Erith and Greenwich reaches; snorting little tugs struggle frantically as they drag big East Indiamen down to the Nore; but still the real Silent Highwaymen nowadays are the passenger steamers.

The river steam-boat traffic may be divided into the above and below bridge; for, though some of the Greenwich boats proceed as high as Hungerford, the chief portion of their trade lies between London-bridge and their point of destination, while none of the Chelsea boats are seen east of London-bridge. The above bridge traffic is conducted by the boats of the Citizen and the Iron Steam-boat Company, working in harmony and sharing "times." Their management is, I believe, excellent; but in this paper I shall confine myself to

speaking of the Watermen's Company's fleet, which is the largest and the longest established on the river. Forty years ago, when the inhabitants of Greenwich had occasion to visit London, they were conveyed to and fro in boats with covered awnings, rowed by a pair of oars, in which, at a charge of sixpence each, they were brought to Tower stairs: those going by land had the privilege of paying eighteenpence for a ride in a slow and very stuffy omnibus, while Woolwich residents had to get to Greenwich as best they could, and thence proceed either by land or water conveyance. As Greenwich extended and the power of steam became known, the watermen of Greenwich formed themselves into a company, and started one or two steam-boats; one opposition company did the same, a fraternity at Woolwich followed in the track, and the opposition became tremendous. All these boats started from the same piers at the same time, and the happy captain was he who could cleverly cut into his adversary, knock off her paddle-box, and thus disable her for several days' trip. This state of things could not last long, the Greenwich Company "caved in," the Watermen's and the Woolwich Com-

pany entered into amicable arrangement, and thenceforward ran in concord.

These two companies own thirteen boats each; the total number of river steam-boats plying on the Thames between Gravesend and Richmond being about sixty. The boats belonging to the Watermen's Company average about ninety tons each; each measures about a hundred and sixteen feet in length, fourteen feet in width and eight feet in depth. All are built of iron, manufactured in the company's own yard at Woolwich, where about seventy artificers are in constant employment: in addition to which force, the company has about sixty men afloat, and eighteen collectors of tickets or supervisors. Each boat has a crew consisting of a captain, a mate, two men, a call-boy, an engineer, and a stoker. With the exception of the engineers and stokers, all these men must be free watermen (an act of parliament accords to the Watermen's Company the privilege of demanding that all the crews of passenger-carrying vessels must be watermen), and all work up, in regular rotation, from the post of call-boy to that of captain. This alone secures that intimate knowledge of the river, and that incessant vigilance, which is ab-

solutely necessary for the protection of life; the call-boy is apprenticed to the captain generally, and rises by gradual steps from the bottom of the paddle-box to the top of it, from watching the captain's fingers and explaining his pantomime to the engineer, to twiddling his own fingers and commanding the boat. Every where, except in the engine-room, the captain is supreme, and even the engineer is bound implicitly to obey the captain's orders as to the speed and direction of the vessel. Liberal wages are paid; the captain receives two guineas a week, the engineer the same, the mate has thirty shillings, the men six-and-twenty, the boy seven: and this is not too much, when it is remembered that about fourteen hours daily is the average attendance required of each.

The expenses attendant on the management of such a company are very large. In addition to the weekly wages just detailed, it may be reckoned that the primary cost of each boat, exclusive of repairs, is five thousand pounds, while the pierage-dues are enormous. At the piers held by the Thames Conservancy the company have to pay sums averaging from one penny to sixpence for every time their

boats call, while at other piers they are charged amounts varying from four shillings and sixpence to seven shillings and sixpence for every hundred passengers landing. Thus they disburse between three and four thousand a year in pier-dues; the rent of the Greenwich landing-stage, which belongs to a company, is alone two thousand pounds a year. With all these disbursements, the company pay a dividend of five per cent. A complaint of drunkenness or incivility against those employed by them is unknown; and such good feeling exists, that the masters now invite the men to an annual supper, at which great conviviality reigns, and the highest mutual respect is expressed.

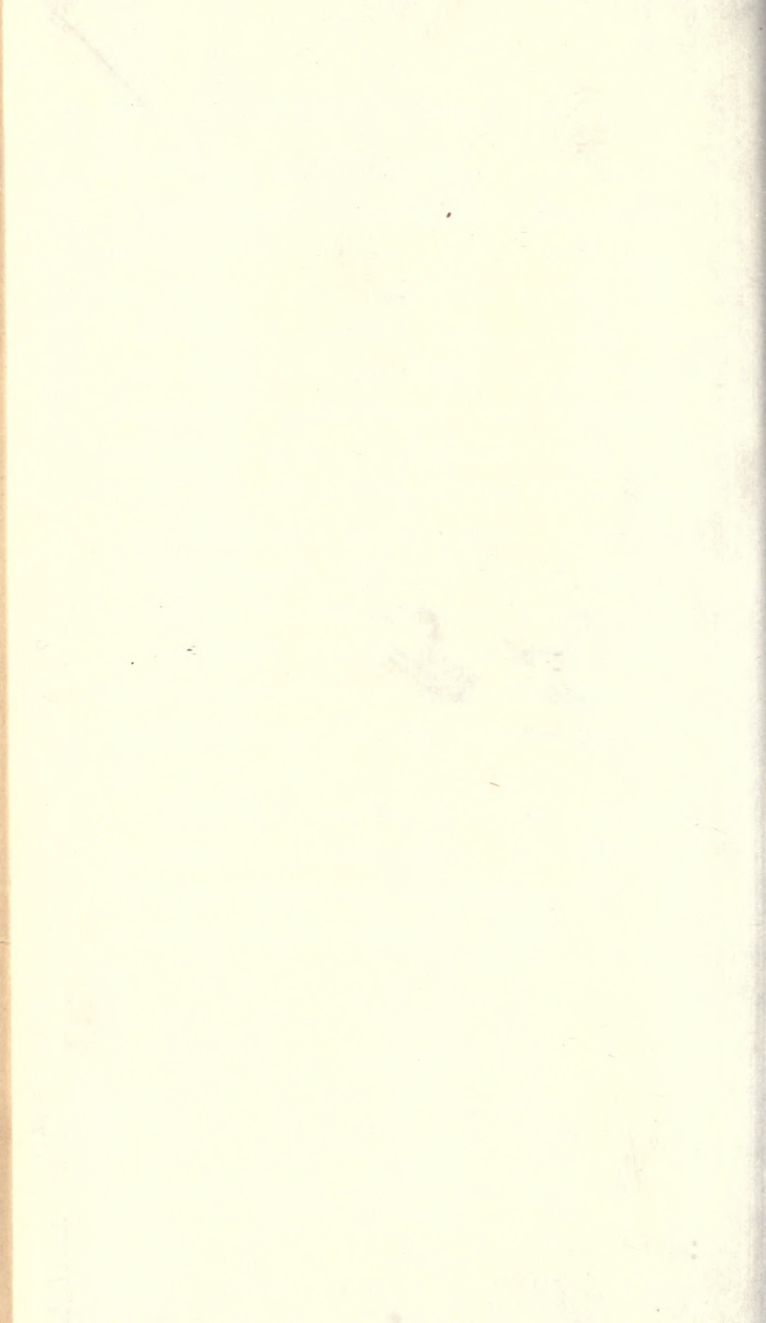
Here is a little bit of the history of my modern silent highwaymen. Come, Monsieur, Herr, or Signor, and show me anything like it in the countries where you dwell.

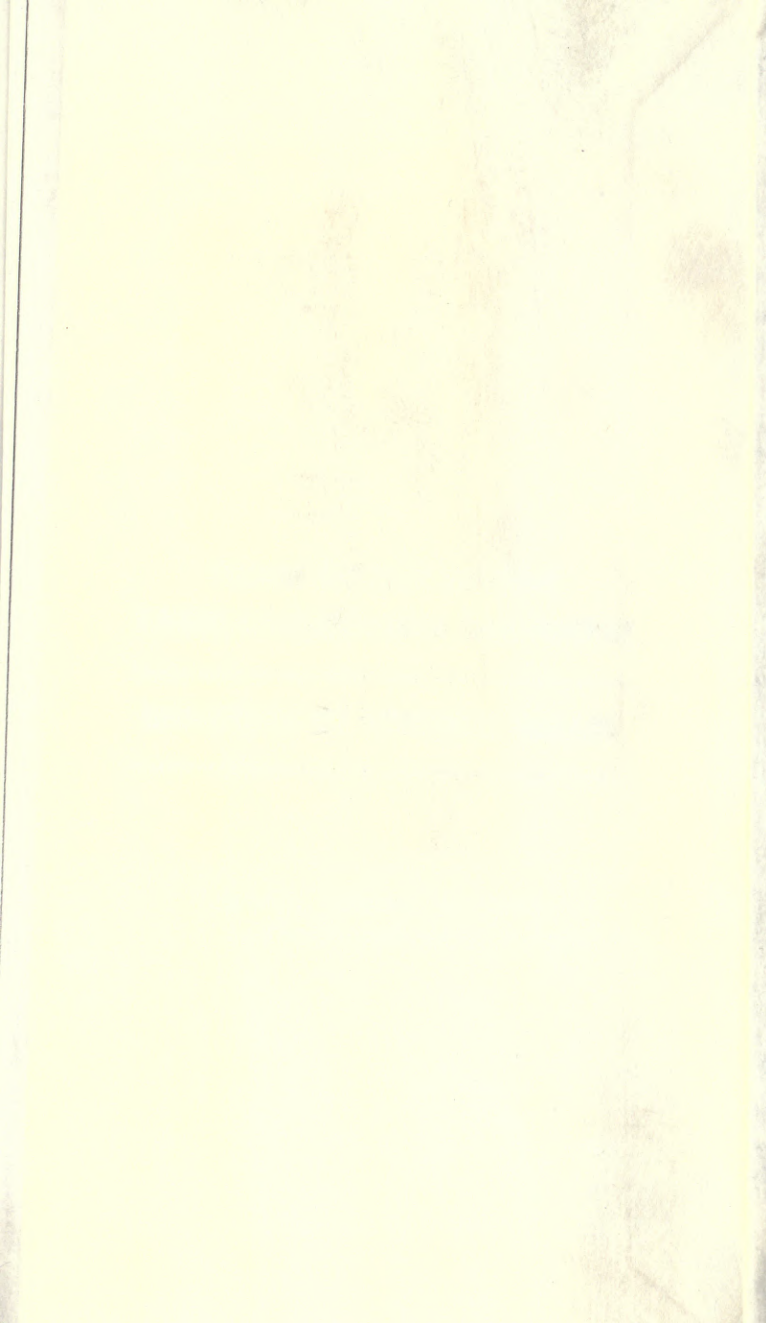
THE END.

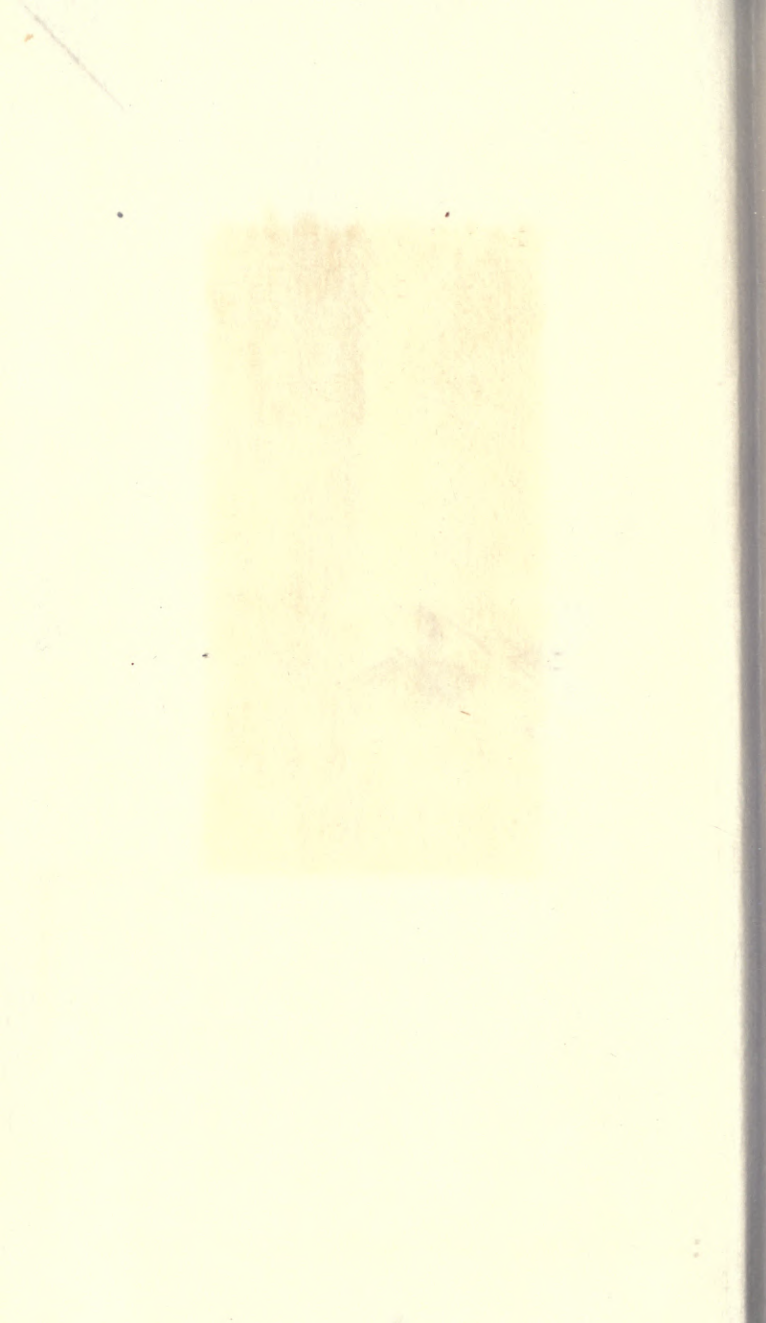
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